

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW ALICE KERR SOLD A PICTURE.

A FINE afternoon in the regions of South Kensington, sun in the streets, warmth and brightness within doors. Especially bright were the handsome drawing-rooms of Mrs. Hartley Carroll; and very bright indeed looked that young lady herself, as she stood there with her sister, Edith Leicester, and their guest, Alice Kerr; the latter timid as inexperienced girl can be, while waiting for the coming company—who might perhaps be asked to inspect the drawings of her dead father.

"You must not expect a crowd, Alice," said Mrs. Carroll. "I like to see people able to turn round; but I daresay you will find some one pleasant to speak to. It is the rule that everybody comes here to be pleasant. If you meet with anyone who is dull you may tell me."

"Am I to tell the parties themselves?"

"Of course; I see you are intelligent."

"I am frightened enough as it is."

"What in the world are you frightened about? Don't you know that people expect something out of the way from a real genius? Let me look at you, Alice. Not so bad, considering. Come, Edith, tell me if you do not think my morning's work satisfactory?"

Edith smiled and approved; but with an amount of reserve that, when Alice's eyes and ears were absorbed in a large volume of Spanish photographs, made Tiny observe, in a tone of pique, "You might give me some credit, I think, for doing so much on such short notice!"

"Credit?" repeated Edith, significantly.

"Oh! that is the grievance, is it? Why, Madame Delphine took it as a matter of course; so, if she is satisfied, we ought to be."

"When she, and others, *are* satisfied, I shall have no more to say."

"Well, that may be sooner than they expect. It depends on how the wind blows. I cannot help being uneasy. Hartley tells me things are in a very uncomfortable state, and that we may double our income this year."

"Double your income! Is that what makes you uneasy?"

"Yes; because there is another possibility—we may lose more than half what we have already."

"My dear child, are you in earnest?" asked Edith.

"Sad and sober earnest: but we are not going to tell anybody but yourself."

"I wish I could advise—or help you."

"I wish you could. If you were the rich woman you were meant to be, I believe you could do Hartley a good turn, for it all hangs on his maintaining his credit."

"Clare, you know whatever I have is yours; do let us see what can be done towards retrenching and clearing off difficulties. I have been afraid of this some time, and I have been saving all I could in case ——"

"Hush! Thank you with all my heart, but I am not going to pay my extravagance out of your economy. There are other ways of helping me—but you must find them out for yourself."

The entry of visitors, and of Hartley himself, looking as easy and good-humoured as if he had not a care in the world, cut short this dialogue, and distracted the attention of both sisters; but, in the interest of the topic, they had both forgotten Alice's vicinity, and had raised their voices sufficiently for her to hear more than she could understand, though quite enough to give her a pang of consternation. Edith, as she turned to seat the guests, read the young expressive face in a moment, and saw that they had been overheard. She took the first opportunity, and laid her hand on Alice's shoulder.

"Don't look so unhappy, dear—there is no cause."

"Oh, Edith, I didn't mean to listen—I couldn't help hearing something. Not much—only ——"

"Only the old story of the town and country mouse. Our happiness does not depend on all these things. Your art is worth them all. You are richer than any of us."

"I wish I could see that, and what your happiness did depend upon, for I would do anything to get hold of it," said Alice to herself, as Miss Leicester passed on. "It is nonsense to say I am richer than they are—papa was greater than I shall ever be, and he was miserably poor. Here comes Sir Jesse Strahan. How eagerly he goes up to her, and is telling her something while he holds her hand. I am sure he admires her with all his heart, and they say he is immensely rich. I wonder ——"

Her imagination once set to work, she soon arrived at a point not far from the truth: it rested with Edith to help her sister with the riches of Sir Jesse Strahan, and Edith's high spirit shrank from encouraging him under the circumstances.

"Well, Miss Kerr, what are you studying so deeply?" asked Hartley Carroll, coming up to the table near which she was sitting.

"I was thinking about Sir Jesse Strahan," said Alice, intrepidly. "May I ask you something—or is it a liberty, when he is your friend?"

"Miss Kerr, this is Liberty Hall, as Mr. Hardcastle would say. Give your own orders, and we are all your slaves. What can I tell you?"

"Is Sir Jesse Strahan very rich and very good?"

"Humph! You have a great deal of curiosity. He is rich enough always to have money in his pocket; he is good enough always to keep up the appearance of being so. Will that do?"

"Not quite."

"Then you must ask others of his acquaintance. The real fact is, Miss Kerr, that I believe in the hands of anyone he really cared for and could thoroughly respect, he might do a lot of good—he has the means and the opportunities—plenty of them. Anyone who could lead him at all might perhaps lead him right."

His voice had dropped; his manner became more earnest than Alice had seen it yet. The next moment he was laughing and chatting with some young ladies who had just come in, and whom Mrs. Carroll brought up to make acquaintance with Miss Kerr.

"No, no, Miss Ford, we are not to have any private views; everything with us is conducted on mercenary principles. The drawings will not be shown till one of our amateurs comes, who has bespoken the first offer, and when he is here we shall have an open exhibition and auction, like the scene in the 'School for Scandal.' I mean to do Careless for once, though it is not my character, as you all know."

"Don't speak too confidently, Mr. Carroll," said Helen Ford, laughing; "here is Miss Kerr looking unconvinced, at any rate. Miss Kerr," she continued, turning to Alice as Hartley passed on to receive some new comers, "Mrs. Carroll told me of your courage and spirit in coming over as you did, to be independent and make yourself a name. I admire it the more that I could never have done it myself. Where do you mean to have a studio?"

"I don't know," said Alice, "they are all so kind to me that I have done nothing but amuse myself. I must begin soon to work—Sir Jesse Strahan talked of my studying in the School of Art for a little while, and that he could procure me some introductions."

"Ah, well, take care—he is rather dangerous as a patron. He expects something in return for whatever he does. That is the world's fashion of doing kindnesses."

"I don't think so at all," said Alice, stoutly; "and even if true, it

would be delicious to do something for those who are so good to you—and the more difficult, the better I should be pleased.”

“You think so now—it is natural at your age. A little later, and you will begin to see as Jaques thought, however mildly he put it:—

“All the world’s a sham,
And all the people in it live by shamming.
They take their turns at taking in each other.”

“Oh, don’t, Miss Ford! I’ve heard that sort of thing before, and I can’t bear it. Some gentlemen once came to see my father who talked as you do, and they said that all the old beliefs were dying out in art, in history, in politics, in religion—and that nothing would soon be left us worth quarrelling about, as these things never could revive again.”

“And what said your father in return?”

“He said very little to them, only smoked his pipe, and smiled. But when I asked him about it afterwards, he took his brush and sketched such a charming little figure of Mrs. Partington sweeping the tide out of her back-door! I have got it still. ‘There, child,’ he said, ‘the new brooms may be as busy as they like, but the Atlantic will still roll on, when all’s said and done.’”

“Epigrammatic, certainly, but shallow, as all such answers are. However, your father was quite right to leave your young romantic belief unshaken. The happiest time is while we do believe. All looks very bright to you just now, does it not?”

“Well, it is very nice being here, though I know it cannot last; but it was not at all bright yesterday morning, I can tell you.”

And encouraged by her companion’s look of curiosity, Alice told her adventure, and had the satisfaction of thoroughly interesting her listener.

Miss Ford’s cheeks, which had been rather pale, were now of a bright red, and her eyes began to glitter.

“Gabriel Bruce returned to England—and expected here? Clare never mentioned that. How was he looking? Careworn, or as if he had been ill?”

“Not a bit of it. He looked all strength, kindness, and courage. He was eager to be in England to keep an appointment, and I believe he has been making money; I am—there he is!”

And as she spoke, the group nearest the door was seen to divide. Gabriel appeared, and was shaking hands with Hartley Carroll.

Yes, it was true what Miss Ford said—the world did look bright to Alice Kerr at that moment; the sight of that face had filled the room with magic radiance, and she stood, trembling and glowing with excitement, waiting for his eyes to turn her way, that she might enjoy the delight of being recognised in what she felt to be such favourable circumstances. She longed to call him by name—every second of delay was intolerable to her impatience, and people would

come between them, and stop him to talk and answer questions. There—now he was looking—he saw her—oh, what a look that was! A moment of bewildering joy—and she had almost sprung forward.

That look, with its electric flash lighting up his whole face, was not at her, but at some one just behind her, whose hand involuntarily grasped that of Alice, and she felt every finger quiver with some deep emotion, the stronger for being so forcibly kept back. No need to turn and examine the face—that pressure of the hand was the answer to the look, and Alice understood, as artist and poet intuitively do understand when the language is that of the heart.

"Alice," said the voice of her friend, and it only shook a very little, "there is Mr. Bruce. I wonder if he will know you."

"He will hardly trouble himself to see whether I am in the room," muttered Alice. Her fairyland had suddenly changed, and she was bewildered by the whirl of dust and dead leaves which filled the place of the dazzling vision. Mechanically, however, she moved forward as Edith drew her on, and saw, as if in a dream, how she and Gabriel met. It was almost in silence—they looked into each other's eyes, and their hands joined for a moment, then Edith hurriedly thanked him for his care of Miss Kerr, and Mr. Bruce, with a smile, disclaimed all merit—the pleasure had been entirely on his side. And he turned to his fellow-traveller of the day before, and shook hands so kindly, she could only return the greeting with as much warmth as possible, and then stand and listen to the other two.

It seemed difficult for them to converse; a few questions passed, which anybody might have overheard; and Gabriel's eyes were now under better control, and only betrayed their master by dancing with light. Edith, her whole frame thrilling with an ecstasy that terrified but completely mastered her, had never looked more lovely. Eyes, lips, cheeks, were as if a statue had been touched by a wizard's finger, and were still quivering with the new-born life—her sadness and thoughtfulness had rolled away like a cloud, and she had forgotten everything for the moment but that Gabriel had returned, and that he had never loved but her. The wrong she had done him was forgiven—if a wrong it had been. The five years' exile had ended in his complete triumph, and he had come to claim his reward.

Oh, if he could but be alone with her for a moment!

But appearances had to be kept up, and with all these eyes and ears watching them, it was safest to talk of Alice Kerr; and Alice found herself, presently, the centre of so much agreeable and flattering notice, as the company took part in Gabriel's welcome, that her spirits revived—she even thought her judgment had been deceived; perhaps they were only friends after all; and if it were otherwise, what difference could it make to her? It was only an idiot who could have dreamed such a dream as hers had been—and she should take care never to dream it again—never! And when Gabriel thanked her, as he did with fervour the first moment he could,

for winning him this pleasant reception, she kept her resolution by making him a little set speech about gratitude—in the middle of which she caught Miss Ford's eye, and the words died on her lips.

"What is it—are you feeling tired?" he said, in that kindly tone she thought so sweet. "Here is a chair—you are not quite rested after your journey, I am afraid."

"Yes, I am—my journey was delightful. Mr. Bruce, I want to ask you something. Is it true that people are beginning to find out that everything is a sham?"

"What things, Miss Kerr?"

"Well, every good thing—art—religion—gratitude—romance."

He smiled at the mixture. "Who has been saying so?"

"Miss Ford. There she is, just behind you. She seemed to think it was only my ignorance that made me think those things real."

He turned, and looked at Helen Ford. She had not joined in the groups that bade him welcome, but she came forward now and held out her hand. As in duty bound, he took it in his own, but the bow with which he relinquished it was more polite than friendly.

"England must be a changed country," he observed, "if she has learned to do without two, at least, of these. Even if art and romance should be driven away to happier shores, I should be sorry to stay in her if she had neither gratitude nor religion."

"Bruce!" called out Hartley Carroll, "here is our friend Sir Jesse Strahan describing an aboriginal you have tamed and brought home. Where have you housed him?"

"I beg Sir Jesse Strahan's pardon," said Gabriel, courteously going forward. "I owe him thanks for his kindness in calling on me last night, and leaving Mrs. Carroll's invitation. My intention was to acknowledge his politeness in person the first opportunity."

"Then here he is, my dear fellow, and it is high time you met, for you are rivals in a fair field, where a lady holds the prize," said Hartley, unconscious of the double truth his words conveyed, while he was busily unfastening Alice Kerr's precious portfolio. "Miss Kerr, you are wanted here," he continued. "No one must touch these without your permission."

The company crowded round the easel on which the portfolio was placed, and there was a general murmur at the fading light. Mrs. Carroll rang the bell, and lamps were quickly brought in and candles lighted. Hartley turned to the footman as he was leaving the room.

"Are Mr. Bruce's servants below?"

"No, sir."

"Bruce, why didn't you bring them? I thought you were inseparable from your followers, and I want to see these treasures."

"They are gone on business into the country," said Gabriel.

"There are two of them, then?" observed Sir Jesse. "I only saw one—a very remarkable person he appeared to me. Has he any past history likely to give him trouble?"

"All I know of his past history is so much to his honour, Sir Jesse, that I feel satisfied he has nothing to be ashamed of in the rest."

"He gave me the impression that he had a history and would rather not tell it," said Sir Jesse, drily, putting up his gold eye-glasses as the first drawing was placed on the easel. Gabriel bit his lips, and stroked his moustache reflectively. Instead of looking at the picture, he took a silent survey of the rival competitor, in whose tone he had detected a ring of hostility beyond what would be justified by the circumstances.

"Are you really bold enough, Mr. Bruce, to bid against Sir Jesse Strahan?" asked the clear metallic voice of Helen Ford, as she stood at his elbow. The question was audible to most of the guests, and ears were pricked up with the expectation of an entertaining scene.

"I had no such ambition, Miss Ford," was the calm reply. "I believe I was the first bidder—was it not so, Miss Kerr?"

"It was, indeed," replied Alice.

"This is really first-rate," said Hartley, examining the sketch. "Now then, Bruce, out with your gold-dust; I stand here as Miss Kerr's representative and trustee. We mean to make you pay handsomely for the private view."

"But I am ignorant of these matters," replied Gabriel; "therefore the full value must be estimated by some better judge than I. Perhaps Sir Jesse Strahan will favour us with his opinion? At whatever price he fixes, I am ready to make my selection."

Sir Jesse bowed; looked at the ladies, to see if they confirmed this request; smiled benignantly at Alice, and then at the rest of the company—a smile which implied that such a task was simple enough to him, though it might be hard to anyone else.

"Let us see them all, and compare them," he said, authoritatively: and the three studies from Walter Scott were set up in favourable lights, and a murmur of approbation passed round. Alice's eyes filled with tears, and Edith's hand stole quietly round her shoulders.

"Can you give us any idea, Miss Kerr, about the price the lamented artist was in the habit of receiving for sketches like these?" asked Sir Jesse—more to gain time than because he cared for the information.

"I can, indeed," said she, almost with a sob; "they took his work at a twentieth part of its worth, and then sold it at a large profit. The dealer offered me twenty pounds for the three. I said I would starve first."

"You were perfectly right; they are worth much more. My own opinion, which you must take only at its correct value—I may be wrong—but my decided opinion is that the three ought to fetch seven hundred pounds—that is, three hundred and fifty for Marmion, two hundred for Rokeby, and one hundred and fifty for the View of Melrose. I should like to know if the gentlemen present agree with me."

"I, for one, and perhaps the one most immediately concerned, beg to differ from you, Sir Jesse," said Gabriel.

"Indeed, sir? Well, I can only repeat what I have said, and if you were not aware of what you were undertaking, I am sorry for your disappointment. Any real judge will tell you the same, and I advise Miss Kerr not to part with them for less."

"You mistake me, Sir Jesse; *my* opinion is that one of these sketches is decidedly estimated below the mark. You say they are worth seven hundred for the set; I say seven hundred is not too much for the Rokeby, and I choose it, with Miss Kerr's leave, at that price. Not a penny under."

"Bravo!" shouted Hartley, and all the room rang with applause.

The gold eye-glasses slipped through Sir Jesse's fingers; his sallow complexion grew dark, and his brow contracted with rage. He turned upon Gabriel as if he had been an unruly official, whom a word would humble and dismiss; but recovered himself with a sarcastic bend of the head. "I understood this was a simple affair of business; I had no idea that the imaginative faculty was to be called into play. Heavy prices are not in my line; I know something about the market value of works of art among ourselves; but colonial magnificence, whether of mind or money, is beyond my experience altogether."

"I pretend to no other knowledge in the matter beyond knowing what I admire," said Mr. Bruce, "and the price I offer Miss Kerr is the proof of my admiration. She has been good enough to give me my choice among the pictures, and I have made it."

He lifted the sketch from the easel, and laid it aside with the composure of one who felt he was in the right. Tiny, who was standing close to Sir Jesse, perceived that he was trembling from head to foot. She glanced at her sister, and thought she had never seen her look so lovely. The soft light in her downcast eyes, the half-smile playing on her lips, the glow of sensibility on her cheeks, were all the more striking that she was entirely unconscious of their being so. Her thoughts were not in the scene around her, but had flown back to one of years past; and it was with a start that she woke from her reverie to answer a laughing remark of Helen Ford's on the lamentable ignorance of the present day. Here were three of the party present who had just confessed they had never read "Rokeby," and had no idea what that picture was about. What could one do to such people? Mr. Burlington Ford was asked to sing that new arrangement of 'A weary lot is thine, fair maid:' and Gabriel found a moment to address Alice.

"You are satisfied, I hope?" he said, kindly.

"No, I am not," was her abrupt answer. "If the picture is only worth two hundred, I don't see why you are to pay seven."

"If the picture is worth seven to me, I don't see why I am to cheat you out of five. To tell you the truth, I think your pompous-

looking connoisseur there wanted setting down. He was fixing a price at his own pleasure, and ridiculously low. Don't part with either of the others on his terms—you will get the full price, I am convinced, in time."

"You are right," said Hartley, "and, what is more, I expect to hear you get an offer for this, Bruce, before you are many days older. If Strahan had his eye on it, and I think he had, he will never rest till he has made it his own."

"His unquiet spirit may prepare, then, for a long journey, for not a finger shall he lay on that masterpiece. I am going to bespeak its frame directly. I say, Carroll, shall any of you be at home this evening?"

"I never know what is to become of me after dinner. You had better come and dine. I suppose you and Miss Kerr have accounts to settle?"

"Yes, indeed," said Alice, eagerly. "You know, Mr. Bruce, you were my banker yesterday—how long ago it seems!"

"Your banker? Oh! I see, I may not presume to take the liberty of a friend. Well, I shall hope to deserve more in time. I will bring your account, Miss Kerr, and hand you over the balance. I owe you much—a great deal more than you are aware of," he added, in a low voice, as Hartley moved away. "You have helped me to an hour of such happiness as I have longed for—I cannot tell you how intensely. You must go into what is really a thirsty land to appreciate the simile of panting for the water-brooks."

"Is this your appointment, then?" asked Alice, suppressing a sigh. There was such a charm in his confidence that she could not resist seeking for more.

"Your quick perception becomes you. But you must remember this. I have only hope at present—I ought to hold my tongue on the subject; but we seem to be like old friends, and I cannot help wishing for your sympathy."

"You have it, indeed," she said, with girlish sincerity. It never occurred to her that it would be perilous work to give sympathy where she might learn to wish for more in return. She did sympathise with him, she thought; at least, she liked him to single her out as his confidante, and to know he looked upon her as on a friend of old standing; and she owed him so much gratitude that this was the least she could do to show it. Instinctively, she had learned that the road to his regard would now be through his passion for Edith—though the name had not been spoken; and she felt at the moment that for two such friends to be united ought to be great happiness for herself.

Her eyes, the most attractive feature in her face, were full of warmth and gratitude as she looked up at her protector of the day before; and she received an immediate reward in the kind glance they met in return.

"I was rather proud of coming back to England with two good friends," he said, "and now I can say I returned with three."

He took leave, after saying this, without having exchanged more than a dozen words with Miss Leicester the whole time.

"What was Mr. Bruce saying to you, little one?" asked Tiny. Alice told her frankly. Mrs. Carroll was silent for a minute, and glanced across the room, where Sir Jesse was detaining Edith.

"He may have gained another friend, and so may we," she said, "but I am very much mistaken if we have not all made an enemy."

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW GRACE FETCHED A PARCEL.

"If you please, Miss Edith," said Nurse Ellis, "Grace Pyne would be glad to speak to you before she goes. I've given her some tea, and she's got on so well with Miss Kerr's work now that she can finish it at home."

"Send her up to me."

It was by no slight effort of unselfishness that Edith Leicester said this: the tumult of feelings she had undergone during the last four-and-twenty hours had culminated when Gabriel departed without any words to support the eloquence of his look. That he would speak that evening she felt assured, but how long it seemed to wait, after all she had silently undergone—and how difficult it was to think of anyone but him! "Clare was wrong—I know it"—this was the inward cry of her heart; but until he had spoken, the possibility must still remain. Another subject lay on her mind, besides, though of far less interest; Sir Jesse had given her to understand that, from her manner the evening before, he had dared to hope as he had never hoped till then, and life had assumed a new colouring which it would be almost death to change. What had she done, or said, in the sharp pain of that one evening, to give him such an impression? Oh, for a few minutes in peace, to think all this over, and relieve her full heart with prayer!

"Come in, Grace," she said, kindly, as the latter stopped to curtsy at the door. "Sit down, and tell me what I can do for you? Do you wish for some money on account?"

"You are very kind, ma'am, very—but it isn't that. It's about Lucy, ma'am. She has a wish to better herself. If it is for her good, I won't be against it. But I can't be sure. You don't think the theatres are good places for young girls, do you, ma'am?"

"The theatres? Has she taken a fancy in that direction?"

"Yes, ma'am, ever since we have had work to do for one of them; and one of the acting ladies tells Lucy she would just do for their line, and would get to the top of the tree in no time; and Lucy, girl like, is taken with the notion, and sees no harm in it. Lucy could

earn an honest living in service, and be safe in it, under God's blessing. I'd rather she was in a lady's kitchen, or nursery, than turn actress."

"I understand," said Edith, patiently. "You want a situation for Lucy?"

"I wouldn't presume to ask you to take so much trouble, Miss Leicester, only you are so good, and you told me always to come to you first, when I wanted advice or help, ma'am—and so, being here to-day, I thought I would just ask you, instead of trying to see Mr. Forrest—his time is so taken up now, with Lent coming on so near, and the district getting fuller every day. Mrs. Honest tells me herself that he never seems to get his natural rest now, night nor day. He does the work of ten."

"I am afraid that is too true, Grace. Tell Lucy, from me, that I agree with you in recommending service rather than the stage, and that I will look out for a situation such as she will like. It is possible"—a tell-tale blush tinged her cheek, "just possible that I may find one sooner than she thinks. I will speak to Mrs. Carroll. But what shall you do, Grace, if you are left alone? Shall you try service too?"

"I have thought of that, ma'am, more than once, and perhaps it would be better in some ways; but then, you see, ma'am, it would go very hard with me to give up having a corner of my own in case poor Darch Williams should come back. Sometimes I think he never will, and that it's only in the next world I shall see him again; but whenever I've tried to set about giving him up, something seems to rise in my heart to tell me he is still alive, and I get listening to every step on the stairs, as if it might be his, coming up to knock at my door."

"But, Grace, with all the changes that have taken place, how would he know where to find you?"

"Well, ma'am, that's just what it is; if I were to move away anywhere else, he might never find me; but there's an old lady, who is a fast friend of his—she knows where I live, and if he should come back he's safe to go to her. She nursed him when he was little, and still keeps to her ham and beef shop—it is Granny Hughes. I'm sure I thank you kindly for listening to me as you do, Miss Leicester."

"Go home now, my dear Grace, finish Miss Kerr's work, and say to Lucy that she is not to make any plans or engagements till she has heard from me. Mrs. Ellis has something packed up for her supper, if you can manage to carry it."

Cheered by the kindness of her young lady—as Edith Leicester was usually styled in her district—Grace Pyne returned to her humble home, expecting to find Lucy waiting to welcome her. But no Lucy was there. Grace thought she had most likely gone to take their finished work home, and receive the pay. She spread the table with the dainties in her basket given her at Mrs. Carroll's, and then went

to pay their fellow-lodger, old Mr. Martin, the visit he had so particularly requested.

"I'll be bound that Mrs. Dennis has never been near him : it's too bad, paid regularly as she is !"

With this reflection she took her working-apron in her hand, and tapping at the old man's door, was admitted by Mrs. Dennis herself ; who, having been more of a defaulter than usual, was evidently revenging herself on her conscience and her employer at once, by making the room more uncomfortable.

"What, it's yourself, Miss Pyne ? Come along, then, and welcome, only mind you don't trip over my dust-pan. It's right busy we are, you see—I never did come across a place that gathered the dirt as these here model houses does—but some folks must be waited upon as if they had a dozen servants. Yes, Mr. Martin, sir," at the top of her voice, "I was just a-saying, this here 'andsome furniture do take such a time rubbing of it. Oh, yes, I know all about it—you want your supper, and it's high time you had it, so I'll just clear up as I go, and get it all ready. There now !"—with an assumed appearance of consternation—"if I haven't been and forgot your bit of steak at the butcher's. It's too late for it now, so I'll run round to Granny Hughes's shop, and get you a plate of her ham and beef."

"Be quick, Mrs. Dennis," said Grace, good-humouredly : and as soon as the woman had departed, she went to work with a will, restoring order and comfort with every touch. The old man, who had sat smoking a quaint German pipe in silence during the tumult of Mrs. Dennis's performance, gradually ceased as he watched his favourite visitor, and laid the pipe down.

Nobody but Mr. Forrest knew anything of old Mr. Martin's history : except that he had seen better days, the traces of which were evident in his dress, his habits, the old-fashioned pieces of furniture, and the books in their once handsome bindings. It was known, too, that he had money at interest somewhere, for twice a year his dividends came in—a much grander thing than weekly wages : and what impressed the public mind more deeply even than the money was the fact that the postman was constantly bringing him long grey envelopes on matters of business, generally with proposals for investing large sums in lucrative undertakings. This was known to the inmates of the lodging-house, and many a discussion had been privately held as to whether Mr. Martin might not be a man of great wealth, choosing to live alone because he was eccentric, and hoarding sovereigns and bank-notes in his bedding and chimney-corner.

Grace had just made all tidy, had brightened up the fire and laid the cloth, when he suddenly spoke. "That idiot always forgets what I tell her—why, it's Shrove Tuesday, and I have not got my pancake. I must and will have my pancake, Grace. Seventy years have I never missed a pancake on Shrove Tuesday, and I'm not going to begin now. It will be the unluckiest year of my life if I do."

"Dear heart alive, sir, you sha'n't be unlucky if a pancake will hinder it. I'll make you one myself." Mr. Martin gave a nod, and resumed his pipe. It was curiously carved, and evidently belonged to the same period as the furniture which took so long to polish properly.

"Grace, that sister of yours grows very pretty."

"So she does, sir," said Grace, well pleased with the compliment.

"Why isn't she at home at this hour? Young girls should not go roaming about the streets alone. I can tell you this, my girl: you might as well throw that child into the Thames at once, as send her about London streets in the dark."

"I've been thinking of getting her a situation, Mr. Martin."

"Ah, indeed! Have you heard of any?"

"No, sir—but it is just possible—you won't repeat what I tell you?" He gave another nod by way of promise. "Well, the servants at Mr. Carroll's say that a very rich gentleman is always paying Miss Leicester attentions, and they think it is most likely she will have him, sooner or later; and if she has a house of her own, I am sure she will stretch a point for Lucy. But it's only servants' talk," added Grace, with a touch of compunction at having gossiped about her kind friend, even to so safe a confidant as Mr. Martin.

"What is the man's name?"

"Sir Jesse Strahan," said Grace, pouring her batter into the frying-pan. The pipe dropped from old Martin's hand, and rolled on the floor. Grace, absorbed in her culinary labour, turned to observe the old man's agitation. He was sitting with both hands clutching the arms of his chair, and the veins of his face swollen with the effort to speak. Setting everything down before the fire, she flew to his assistance, and administered a few drops of brandy, which in a few minutes restored his speech.

"Dear heart, sir, what a turn you gave me! You've been fasting too long, that you have. Now, do sit up and eat your pancake—it's hot and brown and nice, and all ready. What is it? The pipe? Oh, dear me, it's broken. Now, I do call that a pity."

"Let it be," said the old man; "it is only what has happened to better things before now—the mention of that name was quite enough. I've seen the day when the happiness of a whole life, and the lives of others depending upon it, were shivered to atoms in a moment—and that man the cause. If you've told me one secret, I've given you another in return. Let your Lucy run over these wicked streets every day in the week, and take her chance of an angel shutting the mouths of evil ones; but don't let her, or anyone you care for, eat the bread of Jesse Strahan!"

He was trembling all over, the dew stood on his forehead; Grace, startled as she was by his manner and words, concealed her own feelings, coaxed him to eat, and herself placed the coveted dainty on his plate; but though he tried to please her, his hunger and his taste seemed to be gone. He swallowed a few morsels, and

then pushed it all from him, just as Mrs. Dennis came in with her purchase. Her greedy eye took in the whole situation in a moment.

"I haven't been long, Miss Pyne, now, have I? And your sister, she's just run upstairs before me, and hopes to find her supper ready. There, now I'll take care of the dear old gentleman—you mustn't mind his not fancying his pancake just because I didn't make it. And, I say, my deary," following Grace into the passage, and putting a finger mysteriously on her arm, "Granny Hughes asked me to let you know, if you'd look round to-night, that she's got a parcel for you. Somebody's been and left it, and it's to be given into your own hands, or I'd have brought it; and she says you'd better fetch it directly, for fear it wouldn't keep."

Grace took her supper hastily with Lucy, and was soon hurrying towards Granny Hughes's. There were several customers in the little shop, whom Mrs. Hughes and a stout young woman, her granddaughter, were busily engaged in serving. At the sight of Grace the young one nodded knowingly; but it took some minutes to make the old lady comprehend who was come, and why.

"Passel?" she repeated, in the shrill key in which she was accustomed to hold her own in the war of words, "I ain't got nobody to send out with no passels. If people can't carry——"

"It's me, Granny—Grace Pyne," said the visitor. "You sent word you had a parcel to give me."

"Grace Pyne, is it? Eh, dear! and so it be. Oh, yes, I've got *your* passel, sure enough, my dear life; and a precious one it be. Just you step into my parlour a minute—you light her, 'Liza, while I mind the shop; it is nigh upon closing-time, and then I'll come to you, Grace, if you don't mind waiting."

Preceded by 'Liza, whose candle was of no small service in steering the way through the miscellany of articles that choked up the passage, Grace Pyne passed on into the parlour, by courtesy so called. It was a little den of a room, where a fire had been recently lighted, but with so little effect that a man was in the act of stooping over the grate, endeavouring to brighten it up with wisps of paper. He grumbled audibly as 'Liza approached.

"I'd sooner camp out a dozen nights running, with the hoar-frost on my blanket every morning, than be stifled in such an old soot-bag as this!" he said, without turning round; but as the girl, instead of replying, turned up the gas, he became aware of the presence of her companion, now standing motionless in the middle of the room.

"If you'll just sit down, Miss Pyne, Granny will come to you directly. You'd best let that fire alone, Mr. Jones—you'll only make it worse. There! she's a-screaming after me already, as if I'd come here for my own pleasure. Coming, Granny! coming!" and snatching up her candle again, she obeyed the shrill summons, leaving the two alone.

Grace, whose limbs shook under her so that she could hardly sup-

port herself, sat down as requested, her eyes fixed on the stranger—so like, and yet so unlike, the image stamped on her faithful heart. The hair, the beard, the spectacles, all baffled memory and cheated hope: and yet, something in the set of the shoulders, and, above all, in the voice, made her heart beat so that she could not utter a word. He sat silent for a few moments, rose, and turned the key of the door.

"Grace," he whispered. She clasped her hands, with a faint cry.

"Grace—you have not forgotten me, then?"

"Oh, who *are* you?" she faltered. "I thought one minute—but now I seem all wrong again. Who are you?"

"Poor Darch Williams," added he, in the tones she had so often pined to hear once more. "Wait a moment, till I cast this skin, and then you shall judge for yourself."

He cautiously removed the wig, the whiskers, the spectacles, that had disguised his features before, and showed her a face marked with wild living and exposure, hardened, aged, altered in every line, but still the living face she had mourned as lost, if not dead, gazing into her own with a tender confidence that at once blotted out all misgivings. Not a word of reproach for his cruel silence—not a question or doubt as to the reason of his return: her only thought at that moment was of joy and thankfulness; and falling into his arms, she clung to his breast, weeping with ecstasy, and murmuring praise to God.

He held her in his grasp, and kissed her again and again.

"Why, Grace, my darling, I made almost certain you'd have given me up. I meant you to. When I found this place too hot to hold me, that I must run or be ruined, was I going to tie you down with promises to a man who might never be able to come back and claim them? But I find you my own true girl, the same as I left you"—Grace shook her head—"the same in heart, anyhow."

"How could you wish me to forget you?" said Grace, with a little touch of wounded feeling. "Didn't I know they were all falsehoods that were spread about you, and that you would come back when you could to clear up your good name? and didn't I vow to myself, with the Lord's help, that if I were alive to see the day, you should find one at least who believed in you? Our parting is over; and though I am not so young as I was, Darch, I'm as true to you as ever, and what we have to do is to set about making you straight and clear before the world."

"All right, my darling girl, all in good time; but there'll be a deal to think about and talk of before that can be done; and I must tell you at once that, until it *is* done, not a soul but you and Granny must know me, except as Mr. Jones. Promise me that, Grace."

"If it must be, I promise. But it won't be for long, will it?"

"How long will depend on our own cleverness and good luck, my dear girl. I know you will do what you can for me. You won't stick at a trifle to help me at a pinch, Grace?"

"You wouldn't ask me to do anything wrong. You wouldn't do it, Darch, would you, after all that's come and gone?"

He bit his lip. "You were always too good for me, dear," he said, gently, "and since we parted I've been knocking about among a lot that don't just go by the Church Catechism. And if I've led a rough life, it's not my fault, but theirs that drove me to it. And driven I was, Grace, and the only wonder is that I have not turned out worse than I am."

He walked to the grate, and stirred the fire fiercely. Grace watched him anxiously, then crept to his side, and stole the rusty poker out of his hand.

"Come, draw your chair by the fire, since you have made that nice blaze, and tell me all about it. I'll believe nothing against you, Darch, that I don't hear from yourself."

"I *will* tell you all about it," he said, as they sat down together, "and then you shall tell me if you'll stand by me still. I'll not hold you to your old word now—that would not be fair; you shall start afresh, if you do start, for it's no child's play we are about, my woman, and I'm on a road where there's no turning back: and if you're to be mine, you must shut your eyes and go along with me to the end."

"And what is the end to be?" she asked, timidly.

"If I succeed, it will be a new life for me, and a home for the woman who is true to me. I have a part to play, and a difficult one; but it must be carried through, and I believe it will set me clear in the world, with both pockets full of money. But these things are never done without risk, and I have run much of that already."

She pressed the hand that held hers, but could not refrain from a sigh. Her trust was still unshaken, though every word dispelled part of that illusion which, like the sunny haze on a rugged hill-top, had invested his memory with a soft and tender light, such as it never could again resume. The Darch Williams who had returned was no more the one that had gone away than she herself was the blooming girl he had left. Nothing about them was the same but their love, and that must make up for all the rest. She forgot the outer world, the hour, the place, the ill-omened secrecy, the work of the past day, and the coming morrow—everything, but the lost one found, and her resolution to stand by him against the world, till the world should do him justice. So she listened with eager ears, ready to believe all he asserted, to see things from his point of view, to sympathise with his troubles and cheer him with hopes for the future. But of the actual gulf that time had made between their two souls, as yet she perceived nothing.

Perhaps his vision was keener than hers, for he was very wary in what he told her, though the necessity of enlisting her services compelled him to reveal part of the truth. On one point he could satisfy her entirely. So far from having shared in the attack on old Mr. Oram, it was only by accident that he became acquainted with the

fact, long after it had happened. On the other hand, it was a severe blow to hear him acknowledge, rather as a piece of folly than as a crime, that he had fallen into Oram's power by borrowing privately from his stores, intending to repay the loan when he received the recompense of his labour—a job having been entrusted to him which nobody else could execute, and which was to be remunerated accordingly.

"But the fact was," he continued, bitterly, "I knew too much. Oram wanted to be rid of me, and if I had not had warning from one of my mates, I should have been done for; you would never have spoken to me again—and as to marrying, who would have taken a fellow after four or five years in prison? I knew it was all over with me here, so I ran for my liberty, if not for my life. And I thought at one time I should never venture back; but a chance has been given me, and I shall follow it up. I have got the promise of work, and mean to earn a good character—as Mr. Jones. Darch Williams must remain in his grave till he can hold up his head among his friends, and put his foot on the neck of his enemies. Hush! here comes old Betty—not a word of what I have been saying, to her or anyone, if you love me, Grace. I'm coming to open the door, Granny, directly," as the old woman shook it impatiently. Granny came bustling in, with a mixture of amusement and indignation.

"Locking my own door in my face, indeed! Pretty behaviour for a steady young woman like Grace Pyne: but there's no trusting one of ye. Well, my dear, and what do ye think of your passel?"

CHAPTER IX.

HOW GABRIEL MISSED HIS APPOINTMENT.

IF anyone had warned Gabriel Bruce that he might, after all, be unable to keep his evening engagement, he would probably have replied that he had not conquered so many hindrances in the last five years to be beaten by them now. All the arguments of his two followers had not been sufficient to convince him that the nocturnal attempt was of a hostile character. Anybody might have toothache, and buy chloroform, and anybody might mistake a bedroom door; and as to the cap, no doubt there were plenty of them in London. So they could not persuade him, do what they might, to let Joel stay with him in town, while Martin went down into Devonshire. He did not enter into his reasons, but they were sounder than Martin himself would have admitted. The Iron-hand would be less likely to get into difficulties, with the ready Cornish wit on the alert to back him, than if he, inexperienced in English habits of business, were to do his reconnoitring alone: besides, in his secret soul Bruce admitted that they might be watched and followed, and would, at any rate, be safer

together. His authority, when used, was supreme ; and when they had settled him in lodgings, they had gone off by an afternoon train to Exeter, where they were to change for the North Devon line. For the present we must leave them to pursue their journey.

Gabriel had quitted Edith's presence almost abruptly, feeling that if he remained much longer without the power of speaking to her, except on ordinary matters, he might betray his impatience before the curious eyes of unconcerned spectators. Gladly would he have walked home alone ; but an old acquaintance or two, departing at the same time, joined him in his walk, and amused themselves by cross-questioning him as to his past, present, and future. While they were pressing him as to the amount he made per diem at the gold diggings, he perceived that they were passing a Metropolitan station, and promptly availed himself of it as a door of escape.

"Can one get into the City this way?" he asked, stopping short.

"Into the City?" returned the companion whose arm he had just gently shaken off ; "no doubt, if you have an appointment with Gog and Magog, and will be had up by the Lord Mayor if you don't keep it. But, my dear fellow," in a tone of almost piteous expostulation—for this sudden flight of Bruce's would entirely undo the little plan he was privately forming of negotiating a temporary loan—"you never mean to go off in those unknown regions by yourself? You'll get into the wrong carriages—I always do—and there are half a dozen changes on these lines ; and when you expect to arrive at the Monument, you'll be just quietly dropped at Primrose Hill."

"I'll chance it—all right !" said Gabriel, making his way to the carriages.

"I'll go and see David Forrest," thought he. "As near as I can recollect, his quarters used to be within a stone's throw of a first-rate carver and gilder, and I can have this picture framed at once. Blessings on that dear little artist, and on the pickpockets who threw her into my arms yesterday ! It will go hard with me indeed if I do not find more ways than one of repaying her the good turn she did me. Halloo ! I wonder if this is one of the half-dozen changes ?"

The interesting nature of his private thoughts quite prevented his noticing how carefully he was followed—as he had been from the Carrolls' door—by a small, light figure, somewhat resembling a foreign sailor in appearance, the brown skin, gold earrings, and gay neckerchief being in keeping with the easy jacket and low-crowned hat. This man, who had a dark cloak thrown over one arm, seated himself in the same carriage in the City train without exciting the smallest suspicion. No other passenger got in, and Gabriel was too preoccupied to notice his companion, till the latter suddenly leaped up with a cry of horror.

"See there ! see there ! She will be killed !"

Bruce turned his face to the window—and in the same instant

received a swift blow on the back of the head, which laid him senseless on the floor of the carriage.

The man who had struck the blow, and whose whole bearing was at once changed, sprang upon him, knife in hand; with a couple of dexterous strokes he cut open his shirt collar and neckcloth, and drew out a steel chain which Bruce wore round his throat. To this was suspended a small case of the same metal, like a closely-woven purse, and the fingers of the stranger trembled with eagerness as they felt in every direction for spring or clasp, neither of which could they find. The chain was too short to be slipped over the head, and the secret of unfastening it was too well concealed to be discovered in haste and in that dim light. Gnashing his teeth with rage, the man tried to break it, but it defied his strength; he applied his knife to the links, but they were so artfully woven that he only blunted its edge: every moment thus lost might, he knew, bring detection: and maddened by disappointment, he would fain have smashed the network of the steel case, regardless how all this might affect the still unconscious victim. But nothing short of good tools would have enabled him to break it open, and a fearful imprecation on his bad luck escaped his lips, as he felt by the slackening speed that his opportunity was gone. As the train stopped, the door was pulled open; and a clergyman, rather below the ordinary height, but remarkably broad in the shoulders and chest, sprang hastily in, and as hastily recoiled. He had almost stumbled over Gabriel and his enemy.

"What is the matter? An accident?"

The plunderer bounded to his feet—his ready wit at once prompting his reply.

"A fit—the poor gentleman is in a fit—I have been doing what I could. Take him out, and I will run for a doctor:" and quick as lightning he had shot past the clergyman and was out of sight.

The alarm had, however, been given; some porters came running to help, and Gabriel Bruce was lifted out, and became the centre of an excited group, all asking questions at once, till the arrival of a superintendent restored something like order. He at once despatched one messenger for medical aid, and others to fetch a shutter, on which the injured man might be carried, asked a few sharp questions about the manner of his being discovered, and himself thoroughly examined the carriage.

"There is nothing there," he said, as he stepped out, with Gabriel's precious parcel in his hand. "I suppose this is his property. The train may go on—are you going by it, Mr. Forrest?"

The clergyman, who was supporting Bruce's head on his knee, looked up at the sound of his own name.

"Is that you, Stephenson? I am glad of it. No, I can't go on now; I must take care of this dear fellow. He was on his way to pay me a visit, I am sure. It was only this morning I heard of him

as being in perfect health, and just returned from Australia. Can this have been a fit, do you think?"

"We will ask the doctor that when he comes, sir," said the friendly superintendent, who had knelt down to examine the fallen man more closely; "but I can tell you one thing, it has been a very narrow shave. Here, Jack—run for a drop of brandy—quick, now! and bring that sacking over here, some of you: we'll sling him in that, and carry him to my room—that will be quieter than the waiting-room, and better than these cold stones."

The willing feet ran, and the willing arms wrought. Gabriel was soon lying on a heap of rugs by the superintendent's fire, and began to show signs of returning consciousness. A little brandy was poured down his throat and rubbed on his temples, and by the time the surgeon appeared he had opened his eyes and made an effort to speak, then subsided into stupor. The surgeon examined him carefully, administered what remedies were in his power, and then gave the superintendent a hint, which was speedily taken and acted upon. When the apartment had been cleared of all but their three selves and the passive patient, Mr. Harper spoke more plainly.

"This has been no fit, gentlemen."

"I thought not," said Stephenson.

"Who saw him first?" Mr. Forrest told what he knew.

"That fellow you saw was not the one who fetched me?"

"Oh, no—that was one of my men," said the official.

"Has the other come back?"

"No; nor ever will of his own accord, I fancy."

"Well, it looks very ugly altogether. He has certainly had a blow on the back of his head, and the fellow has been trying to get at this"—holding up the chain. "Here are the marks of his instrument—the wonder is it did not go further; those gentry get very savage under disappointment."

"Do you suppose, Mr. Forrest, that your friend would carry valuable property about him in this way?" asked Stephenson.

Mr. Forrest thought it not improbable, as Mr. Bruce was said to be just arrived from the gold-fields; and it was equally possible that some one might have followed him under the impression that he carried gold-dust or bank-notes on his person.

"Should you know the man again?"

"Not to identify him; as far as I could see he was a dark, foreign-looking fellow, and his accent was not English, but I could swear to nothing more."

"Where does your friend live?"

"That I cannot tell you; there may be an address in his pocket."

Nothing, however, was found; and the surgeon suggested the hospital. But to this David Forrest would not agree.

"If you will help us, Harper—it is not the first job we have done together—I'll take him home with me. My house is quiet enough

just now, and my good woman is a capital hand at petting and cossetting sick people. I should not have time to-morrow to come to the hospital."

"To-morrow?" repeated the surgeon, in some surprise, but recollecting himself just in time. "Yes, yes, of course. Well, if you can accommodate him, all the better, for we have no beds to spare. The question is how to get him to your house at all."

This matter was arranged: and Gabriel awoke to consciousness at last in an uncurtained bed, so clean, tidy, and comfortable as to be positive luxury compared with many he had occupied in the last five years.

"What's the matter with me?" he asked the surgeon who sat by his side. "Railway collision?"

"Oh, no, my dear sir—you have only had a hard knock, and must keep quiet for the present. Do you know this gentleman?"

"Old Davie?" said Gabriel, feebly, with an effort to smile.

"Yes, too glad to have caught you, Bruce, my dear boy, and to keep you as long as I can. You are in my house, and my good Mrs. Honest is here to nurse you, and you will be all right in no time."

Gabriel smiled again, but faintly, and closed his eyes. The surgeon watched him with his finger on his pulse, and from time to time administered the medicine he had prepared, till he saw him fall asleep. Being himself much in request, he then took his leave, desiring that his instructions might be carefully attended to, and that the patient should be kept tranquil.

"I would not go away if I were really wanted, but I have been at work all day, and had no dinner. You may do without that luxury, Forrest, but I can't."

Perhaps Mrs. Honest overheard this last observation, for when her master returned to his friend's bedside she made no remark, only took her own measures, and beckoned him away imperatively.

"You'll please to remember, sir," she said, in a tone of suppressed resentment, "that when you went away this afternoon you said you was going to get a cup of tea with an old friend, which would do you good. May I make so bold as to ask if you had it?"

"Not that I am aware of, as I never got beyond the station."

"Very good, sir. Well, now, I put it to you, if you think it isn't flying in the face of Providence to throw your strength away just for nothing at all. The poor dear gentleman is asleep, and I'll take care he is not neglected, if you'll just be good enough to sit down in your arm-chair in the parlour, where your eggs and bacon are keeping hot, and take your tea like a Christian."

"Thank you, sir," said Mrs. Honest, curtsying, and retreating with the cover in her hand, as David Forrest obeyed her commands. To make assurance doubly sure, she ran downstairs and bolted every door, so that no visitor or applicant of any kind could get in without her knowledge. So thoroughly was it taken for granted that St. Edmund's

Parsonage was a refuge always open to everybody who wanted anything, that this was the only chance often of securing to her master refreshment.

"If they'd fix their own hour, and keep to it, no matter what o'clock it might be, one would know what one was about; but the only thing they all agree about is in coming just at the moment he is putting a morsel into his mouth: and he ain't a man, like some, as can live upon air and a biling of peas. Now, Sally, my maid," to a little girl of ten years old, who was learning the rudiments of service in her kitchen, "you listen for the bell, and when it rings you just look up the airy, and say I'll be down directly; they're not to ring again; and then creep up to the bedroom door and tap very gently—there's a good child. You quite understand, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, mum," said Sally, with suspicious alacrity, and the good woman returned to her patient.

Now Sally, who had come from a home of mismanagement and semi-starvation to feed on the best of the clerical larder, had found the love of good things increase with the knowledge of them; and her home training having turned on the principle, "Every one for himself," the first thought in her small mind, after ascertaining that no one would be looking after her for the next ten minutes, was to turn the golden opportunity to account. A row of black-currant jam pots, on the top shelf of the kitchen cupboard, had long been the object of her desires; why not pile chair upon chair, climb to the topmost, and so get one's hand among the treasures on the shelf? One out of so many would not be missed directly; and Sally made the attempt, with a courage and cleverness worthy of a better cause and a happier result. She contrived to secure a pot of jam; and then, as might have been expected, either missed her footing or lost her balance, tumbling down with a crash of chairs and crockery, and a roar of fright and pain that rang through the house—woke Gabriel out of his sleep, and David Forrest out of a waking dream, in which he had seldom time to indulge. He was down in the kitchen in no time, and Mrs. Honest found him comforting the child.

"Don't scold us, Mrs. Honest. Come, Sally, stop crying."

"What in the world induced you to touch that shelf at all?" asked Mrs. Honest.

"Pleas'm, I thought the jam was for the sick, and the poor gentleman would like some," said Sally, with amazing composure.

David looked at Mrs. Honest, and she at him—never were looks more full of meaning. Hers asked, "What shall I do to her?" His replied, "You should not have asked the question. Wait."

He left the kitchen without interfering further, but the good woman took the hint, and told Sally if she really wished to be useful she had better begin tidying up—see what a litter she had made! and no one could touch the jam now, all mixed with broken bits of earthenware—a plate or two having suffered as well as the pot. "Don't fancy you

impose upon me, child, for you don't. I shall keep my cupboard locked in future, till you are more trusty."

Following her master up stairs, she asked him respectfully if he were going to the meeting that evening.

"I must go for a short time; I'll be back as soon as I can."

"No hurry, sir; only if you'd be so kind as to let one of the girls come round and help me: Lucy Pyne, or her sister Grace."

Five minutes, and the housekeeper returned with a pale face of alarm to beg her master would come and see Mr. Bruce.

"I heard him talking as I came up the stairs, sir, and it don't sound right to me. It's my belief he's a little light-headed. I wish Mr. Harper would come back."

David wished the same when he saw the condition of his patient, who had half raised himself in his bed, and was gesticulating with one extended arm, as if arguing with an invisible adversary.

"Not time? I tell you there is time, and a little to spare. Have you deluded yourself into the belief that there is no accumulative power in resolutions made again and again as often as they are defeated, when the defeat is no fault of theirs, and the object is as holy as mine? I tell you, Wily Wilkins, that I know your purpose; and that you think by dint of hunting us down incessantly to tire us out. You never will; if fifty of you stood between her and me, down you would go, though I fell in cutting my way through."

And there was a suggestive swing of the right arm that looked very like sword exercise, but which David arrested with a firm though gentle hand.

"Bruce, old fellow, you are dreaming; lie down again, and I'll take care you are all right," he said, soothingly, as he drew the coverings again over the restless shoulder. His touch and his voice were not without a salutary influence, but seemed to awake another association of ideas, for he began in a very different key.

"That was one of your bright ideas, Martin, about the blankets. If we had unstrapped them in that storm, they would have been soaked—ah, that is comfortable. Leave a corner for poor Zack. He'll sleep the sounder for being close to my revolver. It is wonderful how clever fellows outwit themselves, and how they could think it possible to succeed in such schemes, and escape such dangers, with that poor thing's cause always crying out against them!"

They applied cool lotions to his head, and administered the medicine left on purpose, but the effect was at first but slight. He talked again—incoherently for some time, then with a rapid, fluent utterance, sometimes dropping into a plaintive key.

"An appointment: what does it mean? Why this—that a certain thing, seeming impossible, must be done in a given time. Seeming impossible—just as a crevasse seems impossible to get over, when at every attempt you go right through the snow, and every rope you hold by begins to break, and all nature and all humanity seem in a league

to keep you back, or pull you down. It means, in my case, year after year of loss, and hard work, and danger, and nothing to look for in event of failure, but just working on till one dropped, and yet feeling that one could not, would not, fail, with light burning on before—could not fail, because man is never forsaken while he can believe—God only knows what a struggle it is sometimes. Five years—and no engagement, mind you ; not a word with her first—her father took care of that. When he granted the term he made the conditions—no communication with her till they were over ; so what she has thought of me all the while, and how many obstacles have been growing up between us at home, while I'm breaking my heart in cutting through them out here, who knows ? I don't—God does, who pities us all.

"Put your poor foolish head down close by me, Zack—they shan't touch you. I wish every gentleman present to understand that our revolvers are loaded, and will be at the service of anybody who lays a finger on this poor fellow. He is under my care, and we'll take him back to old England, and bring him to Edith ; and if her smile cannot give him reason, it will make his madness sweet. Is it not enough to make a wise man mad, let alone a poor sold-out soldier, to be up to his throat here in clay and dirt, shovelling and picking day after day, and finding nothing—with home and hope in the distance, which will be lost if he does not find ?"

His voice, which had changed several times during this outburst, dropped mournfully at its close, he lay back exhausted, and at last slept.

"I cannot think why Clare is so late," said Helen Ford.

She was standing near the entrance to her own pretty drawing-rooms, where a large party had already assembled to hear some choice music. Her parties were always popular ; their literary acquaintance was large, and they generally had the advantage of early intelligence in all musical and artistic news. On this particular night the programme, besides a selection of first-rate passages, comprised, by way of interlude, a brilliant piece, vocal and instrumental, by an Italian possessed of considerable histrionic as well as musical powers ; and Mrs. Hartley Carrol had been intensely anxious to be present. On her account Miss Ford had already delayed the performance as late as she could venture to do ; and just as the Signor was commencing his prelude, Sir Jesse Strahan, approaching his hostess, asked if she did not expect the party from Greville Gardens.

"Depend upon it," said Burlington Ford, "they had to wait dinner for Bruce. Here is Mitchell can tell you he saw him start for the City after leaving Carroll's, going underground all by himself. Mitchell has several bets already depending on Bruce's getting safely to his journey's end.

"Who *is* your friend Mr. Bruce, of whom everybody is talking to

day?" asked Sir Jesse. He could put the question the more freely, that the rest of the company had left them standing alone.

Helen Ford seemed to find a little difficulty in answering. "He took us all by surprise a few years ago," she said, "by selling out of the army, and going off to Australia. Before that time he had been very popular with us all—everybody liked him, and he was one of those rare exceptions who never seemed to get into debt; therefore his sudden flight was the more unexpected. Report said that it was in a fit of despair about my friend Clare, who was then unmarried: but how far that was true I cannot say."

"I understood his object was to make a fortune."

"It is very likely that there may have been a mixture of reasons. He ought to have been well off in the world; but his mother's fortune was lost, or very nearly so, through the mismanagement of her trustee. He speculated with it, I believe, and the speculation proved a failure, and she was the sufferer. She was a Miss Wyatt; my mother knew her well, and remembered the whole case, and how hard it was. But I am not sure of the particulars."

Burlington looked at his sister, and she felt his foot giving hers a monitory pressure. Sir Jesse was rubbing his glasses, a slight quiver in his upper lip and one eyelid being the only tokens of an inward agitation which he was forcibly keeping down.

The ringing cadences of the singer's voice, the whirl of notes that were at once representing chariot wheels, *confetti*, and chorus, mingled with the laughter and applause of the audience, covered his momentary silence, and gave him time to think.

"What a pity Clare has missed it—something must have happened!" repeated Helen Ford.

"Something happened!—you alarm me. Of what nature?"

"Who can say? Do you believe in those instinctive warnings one reads about now so much—warnings that something has happened, which help to prepare you for the news on the road?"

"I am no believer in anything of the kind, Miss Ford. But stranger things might occur than an accident to one unaccustomed to London, especially if he had much money about him."

"Like Grimaldi's brother," said Burlington Ford. "But Bruce is not the kind of fellow to be easily disposed of. I should be more inclined to think Mrs. Carroll was not well—she looked fagged."

"I wish we knew! Burlington, couldn't you send for a hansom, and go round? You would be back again before supper."

"I have not the slightest objection, if I may smoke."

"No, no, that you must not do on any account."

"Then I can't help you. Ask Sir Jesse to go."

It was said in jest: but Sir Jesse bowed, and expressed his readiness so promptly that Helen was hardly allowed time for apologies. She watched him down the stairs, and then turned to her brother.

"Burlington, what made you give me that hint of warning?"

"A sense of impending danger. What made you talk of that of which you knew nothing?"

"Do you mean the story of Miss Wyatt's fortune? It did not concern him, surely?"

"Only so far as this—that rascally trustee, who spent her money and absconded, was Strahan's own brother-in-law."

"Oh!" said Helen Ford. "But *he* was not implicated?"

"Oh, no—much too clever; he disowned the connection, of course, and it is not everybody who knows it. Only, when one does know it, it is as well not to talk of it in his presence."

Sir Jesse's brougham had been ordered to wait, and he was speedily on his way to Greville Gardens. Knowles opened the door for him with an eagerness that showed the house was on the alert, and Hartley called from the staircase. "Is that you, Bruce?"

Sir Jesse drew a long breath. Bruce had not been there then. He hurried up to the drawing-room, where all eyes turned on him.

"I am come from the Fords," he explained. "Miss Ford was growing anxious, as she fully expected Mrs. Carroll, and, I believe, all your party, including Mr. Bruce. Has he not been here this evening?"

"No," said Hartley. "We waited dinner as long as we could, and have been waiting ever since. I don't like it, I own, and I have half a mind to go and look him up at his lodging."

"What makes you uneasy on his account?"

"First, because he was so anxious to come and pay Miss Kerr her money; and secondly, because Miss Kerr heard from his own lips that he has an enemy, who has followed him across the water, and seems to be dogging him wherever he goes. I am not easy."

"If you like to take my brougham, it is at your service," said Sir Jesse, who saw an opportunity of being with Edith that was not to be thrown away. Turning involuntarily towards her, as he made the offer, he saw at once that he had done her a service, for her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were full of gratitude.

Everybody thanked him, and he sat down among them with an air of conscious merit, when the door-bell rang again.

Alice sprang up. "Oh, now, this time it *must* be Mr. Bruce!" Edith sat perfectly still, and Tiny moved quickly to the door.

They heard a voice speaking to Hartley, and then the steps of two people coming upstairs. The new comer was David Forrest.

"News of Bruce at last," said Hartley, "but I am sorry to say they are bad. He was found senseless in a railway carriage—attacked by some ruffian——"

Alice uttered a shriek. "His enemy! I thought so. Oh, where is he? Do let us go to him!"

"Edith, my dear—oh, Hartley, help her—she is fainting," cried Tiny, springing towards her sister. And Edith, in making an effort to rise, fell heavily on the floor.

(To be continued.)

HELEN WHITNEY'S WEDDING.

"WHAT a hot day it is going to be!" cried the Squire, flinging back his thin light coat, and catching the corner of the breakfast-cloth with it, so that he upset the salt-cellar. "Yesterday was about the hottest I ever felt, but to-day will be worse."

"And all the jam-making about!" added Mrs. Todhetley.

"You need not go near the jam-making."

"I must to-day. Last year Molly made a mistake in the quantity of sugar: and never could be got to acknowledge it."

"Molly—there's the letter-man," broke off the Squire. "Run, lad."

I went through the open glass doors with speed. Letters were not every-day events with us. In these fast and busy days a hundred letters are written where one used to be. It was one only that the man handed me now.

"That's all this morning, Mr. Johnny."

I put it beside the Squire's plate, telling him it was from Sir John Whitney. There was no mistaking Sir John's handwriting: the popular belief was that he used a skewer.

"From Whitney, is it," cried he. "Where are my speatacles? What's the postmark? Malvern? Oh, then, they are there yet."

"Belle Vue Hotel, Malvern."

"DEAR TODHETLEY,—Do take compassion upon a weary man and come over for a day or two. A whole blessed week this day have I been here with never a friend to speak to, or to make up a rubber in the evening. Featherston's a bad player, as you know, but I wish I had him here now. I and my wife might take double dummy, for all the players we can get. Helen is engaged to be married to Captain Foliott, Lord Riverside's nephew; and nobody has any time to think of me and my whist-table. Bring the boys with you: Bill is as moped as I am. We are at the Belle Vue, you see. The girls wanted to stand out for the Foley Arms: it's bigger and grander: but I like a place that I have been used to.

"From your old friend,

"JOHN WHITNEY."

The little Whitneys had caught scarlatina, all the fry of them. Recovered now, they had been sent to a cottage on the estate for change; and Sir John, his wife, Bill, Helen, and Anna went for a week to Malvern while the Hall was cleaned. This news, though, of Helen's engagement, took us by surprise.

"How very sudden!" cried the Mater.

Tod was leaning back in his chair, laughing. "I *told* her I knew there was something up between her and that Captain Foliott."

"Has she known him before?" asked the Mater.

"Known him, yes," cried Tod. "She saw a good deal of him at Cheltenham. As if she would engage herself to anybody after only a week's acquaintanceship!"

"As if Sir John would let her!" put in the Squire. "I can't answer for what Miss Helen would do." And Tod laughed again.

When the children were taken ill, Helen and Anna, though they had had the complaint, were packed off to Sir John's sister, Miss Whitney, who lived at Cheltenham, and stayed there for some weeks. After that, they came to us at Dyke Manor for three days, and then went with their father and mother to Malvern. Helen was full of Captain Foliott, talking of him to us in private from morning till night. She had met him at Cheltenham, and he had paid her no end of attention. Now, as it appeared, he had followed her to Malvern, and asked for her of Sir John.

"It seems to be a good match—a nephew of Lord Riverside's," observed the Squire. "Is he rich, I wonder?—and is the girl over head and ears in love with him?"

"Rich he may be: but in love with him she certainly is not," cried Tod. "She was too ready to talk of him for that."

The remark was amusing, coming from Tod. How had he learnt to be so worldly wise?

"Shall you go to Malvern, father?"

"*Shall I go!*" repeated the Squire, astonished at the superfluous question. "Yes. And start as soon as ever I have finished my breakfast and changed my coat. You two may go also, as you are invited."

We reached Malvern in the afternoon. Sir John and Lady Whitney were alone, in one of the pleasant sitting-rooms of the Belle Vue Hotel, and welcomed us with outstretched hands.

"The girls and William?" cried Sir John, in answer to inquiries. "Oh, they are out somewhere—with Foliott, I conclude; for I'm sure he sticks to Helen like her shadow. Congratulate me, you say? Well, I don't know, Todhetley. It's the fashion, of course, to do it; but I'm not sure but we should rather be condoled with. No sooner do our girls grow up and become companionable, and learn not to revoke at whist, when they can be tempted into taking a hand, than they want to leave us. Henceforth they must belong to others, not to us; and we, perhaps, see them no more frequently than we see any other stranger. It's one of the crosses of life."

Sir John blew his old red nose, so like the Squire's, and my lady rubbed her eyes. Both felt keenly the prospect of parting with Helen.

"But you like him, don't you?" asked the Squire.

"As to liking him," cried Sir John, "I am not in love with him:

I leave that to Helen. We don't all see with our children's eyes. He is well enough, I suppose, as Helen thinks so. But the fellow does not care for whist."

"I think we play too slow a game for him," put in Lady Whitney. "He chanced to say one evening that Lord Riverside is one of the first hands at it; and I expect Captain Foliott has been in the habit of playing with him."

"Any way, you are satisfied with the match, as a match?" observed the Squire.

"I don't say but what I am," said Sir John. "It might be better, of course; and at present their means will not be large. Foliott offers to settle an estate of his, worth about ten thousand pounds, upon Helen; and his allowance from his Uncle Foliott is twelve hundred a year. They will have to get along on that at present."

"And the Captain proposes," added Lady Whitney, "that the three thousand pounds, which will come to Helen when she marries, shall be invested in a house: and we think it would be wise to do it. But he feels quite certain that Mr. Foliott will increase his allowance when he marries; probably double it."

"It's not Lord Riverside, then, who allows him the income?"

"Bless you, Todhetley, no!" spoke Sir John in a hurry. "He says Riverside's as poor as a church mouse, and vegetates from year's end to year's end at his place in Scotland. It is Foliott the mine-owner down in the North. Stay! which is it, Betsey?—mine-owner, or mill-owner?"

"Mill-owner, I think," said Lady Whitney. "He is wonderfully rich, whichever it is; and Captain Foliott will come into at least a hundred thousand pounds at his death."

Listening to all this as I stood on the balcony, looking at the grand and beautiful panorama stretched out below, for they were talking at the open window, I dreamily thought what a good thing Helen was going to make of it. Later on, all this was confirmed, and we learnt a few additional particulars.

Mr. Foliott, mill-owner and millionaire, was a very great man in the North; employing thousands of hands. He was a good man, too, full of benevolence, always doing something or other to benefit his townspeople and his dependents. But his health had been failing of late, and he had now gone over to the Cape, the sea-voyage having been advised by his doctors. He had never married, and Captain Foliott was his favourite nephew.

"It's not so bad, after all, is it, Johnny?"

The words were whispered over my shoulder, and I started back to see the radiant face of Helen. She and Anna had come in unheard by me, and had caught the thread of discourse in the room.

"I call it very good, Helen. I hope he is good too."

"You shall see," she answered. "He is coming up with William." Her dark brown eyes were sparkling, the fresh healthy colour

shone on her cheeks. Miss Helen Whitney was satisfied with her bridegroom-to-be, and no mistake. She had forgotten all about her incipient liking for poor Slingsby Temple.

"What regiment is Captain Foliott in, Helen?"

"Not in any. He has sold out."

"Sold out!"

"His mother and his uncle made him do it. The detachment was ordered to India, and they would not let him go; would not part with him; begged and prayed of him to sell out. Nothing ever vexed him so much in his life, he says; but what could he do? His mother has but him: and on Mr. Foliott he is dependent for riches."

"Entirely dependent?"

"For *riches*, I said, Johnny. He has himself but a small competence. Ten thousand pounds nearly comprises it. And that is to be settled on me."

A slight bustle in the room, and we both looked round. Bill Whitney was noisily greeting Tod. Some one else had followed Bill through the door.

A rather tall man with reddish hair and drooping reddish whiskers, bold handsome features, and a look I did not like in his eyes. Stepping over the window-sill from the balcony, they introduced me to him, Captain Richard Foliott.

"I have heard much of Johnny Ludlow," said he, holding out his hand with a cordial smile, "and I am glad to know him. I hope we shall soon be better acquainted."

I shook his hand and answered in kind. But I was not drawn to him; not a bit; rather repelled. The eyes were not nice: or the voice, either. It had not a true ring in it. Undeniably handsome he was, and I thought that the best that could be said.

"Look here: we are going for a stroll," said Sir John: "you young people can come, or not, as you please. But if you go up the hill, remember that we dine at six o'clock. Once you get scampering about up there, you forget the time."

He went out with the Squire. Lady Whitney had a letter to write and sat down to do it; the rest of us stood, some on the balcony, some in the room; Helen, Tod, and Captain Foliott apparently trying which could talk the fastest.

"Why do you look at me so earnestly?" suddenly demanded the latter.

And it was to me he spoke. I laughed, and apologised; saying that his face put me in mind of some other face I had seen, but I could not remember whose. Which was true. It was true also that I had been looking at him more fixedly than the strict rules of society might require: but I had not an idea that he saw me.

"I thought you might be wishing to take my portrait," said the Captain, turning away to whisper to Helen.

"More likely to take your *character*," jestingly struck in Bill,

with more zeal than discretion. "Johnny Ludlow sees through everybody; reads faces off like a book."

Captain Foliott wheeled sharply round at the words, and stood before me, his eyes gazing straight into mine.

"Can you read my face?" he asked. "What do you see there?"

"I see that you have been a soldier: your movements tell me that: right-about, face, quick, sharp," answered I, turning the matter off with a jest. Tod opportunely struck in.

"How *could* you quit the army?" he asked with emphasis. "I only wish I had the chance of joining it." But he knew that he had better not let the Squire hear him say so.

"It was a blow," acknowledged Foliott. "One does meet with raps in this world. But, you see, it was a case of—of the indulgence of my own gratification weighed in the scale against that of my mother: and I let my side go up. My uncle also came on with his arguments and his opposition, and altogether I found myself nowhere. I believe she and he are equally persuaded that nobody ever comes out of India alive."

"Who will take my letter to the post?" called out Lady Whitney. And the whole lot of us volunteered to do it, and went out together. We met Sir John and the Squire strolling about the village rubbing their red faces, and saying how intensely hot it was.

They left us to regale ourselves at the pastrycook's, and sauntered on towards the dark trees shading that deep descent on which the hotel windows look out. We found them sitting on one of the benches there.

"Well, Foliott!" cried Sir John. "You'd not have found it hotter than this in India."

"Not so hot, Sir John. But I like heat."

"How do you do?" struck in a big, portly gentleman, who was sitting on the same bench as the Squire and Sir John, and whose face was even redder than theirs. "Did not expect to meet you here."

Captain Foliott, who was the one addressed, wheeled round to the speaker in that sharp way of his, and was evidently taken by surprise. His manner was cold; never a smile sat on his face as he answered.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Crane! Are you quite well? Staying at Malvern?"

"For an hour or two. I am passing a few days at Worcester, and my friends there would not let me go on without first bringing me to see Malvern."

The stranger spoke like a gentleman and looked like one, looked like a man of substance also (though Foliott did draw down his lips that same evening and speak of him as "nobody"); and Sir John, in his old-fashioned cordiality, begged of Captain Foliott to introduce his friend. Captain Foliott did it with a not very ready grace. "Mr. Crane, Sir John Whitney; Mr. Todhetley."

"A beautiful place, this, sirs," cried he.

"Yes, only it's too hot to walk about it to-day," answered they.
"Have you been up the hill?"

"No, I can't manage that: but my friends are gone up. Have you heard lately from your uncle, Captain Foliott?"

"Not very lately."

"I hear the outward voyage did him a world of good."

"I believe it did."

As if the questions, of the stranger worried him, Captain Foliott strolled away towards the abbey: the two girls, Tod, and William following him. I stayed where I was: not liking the heat much more than the Squire did.

"You know Mr. Foliott of Milltown?" observed Sir John to the stranger.

"I know him very well indeed, sir. I am a mill-owner myself in the same place: but not as large a one as he is."

"He is uncommonly rich, we hear."

"Aye, he is. Could buy up pretty well half the world."

"And a good man into the bargain?"

"Downright good. Honest, upright, liberal; a true Christian. He does an immense deal for his fellow-men. Nobody ever asks him to put his hand in his pocket in vain."

"When is he expected home?"

"I am not sure when. That will depend, I expect, upon how he feels. But we hear the outward voyage has quite set him up."

"Captain Foliott often talks of his uncle. He seems to think there's nobody like him."

"He has cause to think it. Yes, I assure you, sirs, few men in this world can come up to George Foliott, the mill-owner, for probity and goodness."

How much more he might have said in Mr. Foliott's praise was cut short by the hasty appearance of two young men; evidently the friends of Mr. Crane. They laughed at the speed they had made down the hill, told him the carriage was ready, and that they ought to start at once to reach Worcester by the dinner hour. So the portly old gentleman wished us good day, and departed. Running up the bank, I saw them drive off from the Crown in a handsome two-horse phaeton.

It was on the day following this that matters were finally settled with regard to Helen's marriage. Captain Foliott made good his wish—which, as it appeared, he had been harping upon ever since the proposal was first made: namely, that they should be married immediately, and not wait for the return of Mr. Foliott to England. Sir John had held out against it, asking where the hurry was; to this Captain Foliott had rejoined by inquiring what they had to wait for, and where was the need of waiting, and that the chances were that his uncle would stay away for a year. So at last Sir John, who was a

simple-minded man, and as easily persuaded as a duck is to water gave in; and the wedding was fixed to take place the next month September, at Whitney.

We made the most of this, our one entire day at Malvern, for we should disperse the next. The Whitneys to Whitney Hall, the house being now in apple-pie order for them; ourselves back to Dyke Manor; Captain Foliott to get the marriage settlement prepared. Helen's sum of three thousand pounds, all she would have at present, was not to be settled at all, but invested in some snug little house that they would fix upon together after the marriage, so that Captain Foliott's lawyers took the preparation of the deeds of settlement on themselves, saving trouble to Sir John. Three parts of the day we spent roaming the hill: and I must say Foliott made himself as delightful as sun in harvest, and I told myself that I must have misjudged his eyes in thinking they were not nice ones.

But the next morning we got a shock. How swimmingly the world would get on without such things, I leave those who have experienced them to judge. It came when we were at the breakfast-table, in the shape of a letter to Lady Whitney. The scarlatina—which was supposed to have been cleaned and scrubbed out—had come into the Hall again, the kitchen-maid being laid up with it.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish! Whether Sir John or my Lady looked the most helplessly bewildered, might have puzzled a conjuror to decide. Back to the Hall they could not go, and what was to be done? The Squire, open-handed and open-hearted, pressed them to accompany us and take up their quarters at Dyke Manor; and for a minute or two I thought they would have done it; but somebody, Helen, I think, suggested a furnished house in London, and that was finally decided upon. So to London they would go, hire the first suitable house that offered, and the marriage would take place there instead of at home. Captain Foliott, coming in after breakfast from his hotel, the Foley Arms, stared at the change of programme.

"I'd not go to London," said he, emphatically. "London, at this season of the year, is the most wretched wilderness on the face of the whole earth. Not a soul's in it."

"The more room for us, Foliott," cried Sir John. "What will it signify to us whether the town is empty or full?"

"I would strongly advise you, Sir John, not to go. Lady Whitney will not like it, I am certain. As Mr. Todhetley has been good enough to offer you his hospitality ——"

"But, bless my heart," interrupted Sir John in a heat, "you don't suppose, do you, that I could trespass upon an old friend for weeks and weeks—a regular army of us? Were it a matter of a few days, I'd not say nay; but who is to foresee how long it may be before we can get in to our own house? You've not a bit of thought, Foliott."

"Why not go to your sister's at Cheltenham, sir?" was all the Captain said to this.

"Because I don't choose to go to my sister's at Cheltenham," retorted Sir John, who could be as obstinate as the Squire when he liked. "And why should we go to Cheltenham more than to London? Come!"

"I thought it would be less trouble for you, sir. Cheltenham is close at hand."

"And London is not so far off. As to its being empty, I say that's so much the better: we shall more readily find a furnished house in it. To London we go to-day."

There was no more to be said. And the notion became quite agreeable, now that they were growing reconciled to it.

"All things are directed for the best," concluded Lady Whitney in her simple faith. "I hardly see how we should have procured Helen's clothes down at Whitney: there will be no difficulty in London."

"You are right, my dear lady, and I am wrong," conceded Captain Foliott, with a good-natured smile. "To us young men of fashion," he added, the smile deepening to a laugh, "London between August and April is looked upon as a nightmare. But circumstances alter cases; and I see that it will be the best and most convenient place for you."

Drawing Helen aside as he spoke, and taking a small morocco case from his pocket, he slipped upon her finger his first and parting gift: a magnificent hoop of diamonds.

"I should like you to wear it always, my love," he whispered. "As the pledge of your engagement now; later, as the guard of your wedding-ring."

"I shall go in the smoking-carriage, Johnny."

"Shall you! You'll smell finely of smoke when we get there."

"Not I. I'll give my coat a shake at the journey's end. By Jove! I shall get left behind, if I don't take care."

He was right. The train was already on the move. Tod dashed into the smoking compartment; the porter closed the doors, and we were off.

Off to London. He and I were going up to Helen Whitney's wedding, to which we had been invited at Malvern. The Squire declined for himself, though Sir John had wanted him also. This was Monday; the wedding was to be on Thursday: and on the Saturday Anna and William were to go back with us to Dyke Manor.

It was September weather, and a glorious day. Now, as the train steamed away on its windings and turnings, the Malvern Hills would glide into view; and now be lost again. But the beautiful landscape was always to be seen, with its woods and dales and fertile plains; and there was not a cloud in the deep blue sky to obscure the sun.

I had the carriage to myself; and pictured Tod one of a crowd of smokers. At Oxford he came back to the carriage, and got in.

"Had enough smoke, Tod?"

"Just for now, lad," he shortly answered; and began to whistle and pull at his whiskers. By which I knew he had something on his mind.

"I say, Johnny, I am in a dilemma," he burst out when we were going on again, bending towards me from the opposite seat till his face nearly touched mine.

"What about? What is it?"

"Look here. When I got into the smoking-carriage it was full, all but one seat, which I took—and that was a corner one, which they had been polite enough to leave. The carriage was dark with smoke: pipes had been going, I expect, all the way from Worcester. I lighted mine, saying nothing, and nobody said anything to me. The man opposite to me and the one next me had a hot discussion on hand, touching a racehorse; not quarrelling, but talking loud, so that they made a tolerable noise. At the other end of the carriage sat two men facing one another, just as you and I sit now; and one of them I'll vow was an Oxford man: I could tell him by his cut. They were talking together also, but rather in an undertone. All at once, when we were nearing Oxford, there was a lull at my end, and I heard a bit of what they were saying. The first word that particularly caught my ear was Foliott. 'What plant is Foliott up to now, I wonder?' cried one. 'Don't know,' said the other; 'nothing good, we may be sure of. A rumour reached me that he was going to be married.' 'What a chance for the girl!' cried the first. 'Poor thing! But it may not be true,' he went on, knocking the ashes out of his pipe: 'who would marry such a scamp as that?' Now, Johnny," broke off Tod, "the question is, were they speaking of this Foliott? This man that we are now on our way to see married to Helen?"

"Was that all you heard, Tod?"

"Every word. The train began to slacken speed then for the Oxford station, and the two men got up to reach their overcoats and hand-bags, for they got out there. I had half a mind to stop them and ask what Foliott they had been speaking of; but I did not much like to, and while I hesitated they disappeared. They might just have told me to mind my own business if I had spoken; so perhaps it comes to the same."

"Foliott is not an absolutely uncommon name, Tod. There may be plenty of Foliotts about."

"Just so, lad. But, on the other hand, it may be the one we know of, Richard Foliott. One point coincides—he is going to be married."

I sat back on the cushioned seat, revolving probabilities and improbabilities, and thinking of many things. That instinctive dislike I had taken to Captain Foliott's eyes, or to himself, or to both, flashed over me with vivid force. The pretty scenery we were just then whirling past, and on which my eyes seemed to be fixed, might have been a sandy desert, for all I saw of it.

"The worst is, the dilemma it puts one in," continued Tod. "To speak of this to the Whitneys, or not to speak?—that's the question. If it should turn out to be another Foliott, they might never forgive me. *He* never would."

"But then—Helen's whole future may be at stake. It may be in peril."

Tod pulled at his whiskers again. I read the name of a station we were flashing past.

"I hate a doubt of this sort," cried Tod impatiently, "where one can't see how one's duty lies. It bothers the mind. I think I'll let it go, Johnny."

"But, if it should turn out that he is a scamp; and for the lack of a word you let him—let him make bones of Helen!"

"What could I say?" he asked irritably. "That I overheard two fellows, in the smoking compartment of a railway train, saying that one Foliott was a scamp. Sir John would naturally ask me what grounds I had for assuming that it was their Foliott. Well, I have no grounds. And how small I should look!"

"There are slight grounds, at any rate, Tod. The name is his, Foliott; and both are going to be married."

"All the same, I don't see that I can speak."

"Put it in this light, Tod," I said. "You don't speak; and they get married; and then something or other bad turns up about Foliott; and Sir John finds out that it was in your power to warn him in time, and you did not. What will he say then?"

"I'm sure I don't know," grunted Tod. "I wish I could see which side land lies."

All the rest of the way to London we continued to discuss it by fits and starts, and at last hit upon a good thought—to tell the whole to William Whitney. It was the best thing to do, so far as we could see. It might all end in smoke, or—it might not.

The Whitneys had found a furnished house in Gloucester Place, near Portman Square. The maid who had taken the sickness was soon well again, and the Hall was being regularly fumigated now, preparatory to their return. In Gloucester Place they were within half an hour's drive of Miss Deveen's, which fact had guided them to the locality. Indeed, it was but a walk for the younger of the legs.

Not until night did we get the chance of a private talk with William. Our bedrooms opened into one another; and after we went up for good, he sat down in our room.

"You won't be affronted, Bill, at something I am about to say?" struck in Tod, by way of prelude.

"Affronted!" cried Bill. "I! What on earth do you ask that stupid question for?"

"In coming up to-day, I heard a few words in the train," went on Tod. "Two fellows were talking, and they brought up a man's

name in a disparaging manner. It is a friend of yours, Bill ; and Johnny and I had a precious good discussion, I can tell you, as to whether we should repeat it to you, or not."

"Was it my name?" asked Bill. "What could they have to say against me?"

"No, no; they'd have got an answer from me had it been yours. First of all, we thought to mention it to Sir John; but I did not like to, and that's the truth. So we just concluded to put it before you, as one of ourselves, and you can tell him if you like."

"All right," said Bill. "Go ahead."

Tod told him all, from the beginning to the end. Not that it was much to tell: but he brought in our own conversation; the delicacy we felt in speaking at all, and the arguments for and against. Bill was not in the least put out; rather wondered, I thought, that we should be.

"It can't be Dick Foliott, you know," said he. "There's not anything against him; impossible that there should be."

"I am glad you say so," cried Tod, relieved. "It was only for Helen's sake we gave a thought to it."

"The name was the same, you see—Foliott," I put in. "And that man is going to be married as well as this one."

"True," answered Bill, slowly. "Still I feel sure it is quite impossible that it can be Foliott. If—if you think I had better mention it, I will. I'll mention it to himself."

"I should," said I eagerly, for somehow my doubts of the man were growing larger. "Better be on the safe side. You don't know much about him, after all, Bill."

"Not know much about him! What do you mean, Johnny? We know enough. He is Riverside's nephew, a very respectable old Scotch peer, and he is Foliott the mill-owner's nephew; and I'm sure *he* is to be respected, if it's only for the money he has made. And Dick has a very fair income of his own, and settles ten thousand pounds upon Helen, and will come into a hundred thousand by-and-by, or more. What would you have?"

I could not say what I would have; but the uneasiness lay on my mind. Tod spoke.

"The men alluded to conduct, I expect, Bill; not to means. They spoke of that Foliott as an out-and-out scamp, and called the girl he was going to marry Poor thing, in a piteous tone. You'd not like that to apply to Helen."

"By Jove, no. Better be on the safe side, as Johnny says. We'll say nothing to my father at present; but you and I, Tod, will quietly repeat to Foliott what you heard, and we'll put it to him, as man to man, to tell us in all honour whether the aspersing words could have related to himself. Of course the idea is altogether absurd; we will tell him that, and beg his pardon."

So that was resolved upon. And a great relief it was. To decide

upon a course of action, in any unpleasant difficulty, takes away half the discomfort.

Captain Foliott had come to London but once since they met at Malvern. His stay was short; three days; and during those days he was so busy that Gloucester Place only saw him in the evenings. He had a great deal to do down in the north against his marriage, arranging his property preparatory to settling it on Helen, and seeing to other business matters. But the zeal he lacked in personal attention, he made up by letter. Helen got one from him every morning as regularly as the post came in.

He was expected in town on the morrow, Tuesday: indeed, Helen had thought he might perhaps have come to-day. Twelve o'clock on Wednesday, at Gloucester Place, was the hour fixed for signing the deeds of settlement: and by twelve o'clock on the following day, all going well, he and Helen would be man and wife.

Amidst the letters waiting on the breakfast-table on Tuesday morning was one for Helen. Its red seal and the crest upon it told whence it came.

"Foliott always seals his letters to Helen," announced Bill for our information. "And what ill news has that one got inside it?" continued he to his sister. "You look as cross as two sticks, Nelly."

"Just mind your own business," said Helen.

"What time will Captain Foliott be here to-day, my dear?" questioned her mother.

"He'll not be here at all to-day," answered Helen, fractiously. "It's too bad. He says it is impossible for him to get away by an early train, perhaps won't reach London in time to see us to-night; but he will be here the first thing in the morning. His mother is worse, and he is anxious about her. People always get ill at the wrong time."

"Is Mrs. Foliott coming up to the wedding?"

"No," said Lady Whitney. "I of course invited her, and she accepted the invitation; but a week ago she wrote me word she was not well enough to come. And now, children, what shall we set about first? Oh, dear! there is such a vast deal to do and to think of to-day!"

But we had another arrival that day, if we had not Captain Foliott. That was Mary Seabright—who was to act as bridesmaid with Anna. Brides did not have a string of maids in those days, as some have in these. Leaving them to get through their multiplicity of work—which must be connected, Bill said, with bonnets and wedding-cake—we went up with Sir John in a boat to Richmond.

That evening we all dined at Miss Deveen's. It was to be one of the quietest of weddings; partly by Captain Foliott's express wish, chiefly because they were not at home at the Hall. Miss Deveen and Miss Cattledon were to be the only guests besides ourselves and Mary

Seabright, and a Major White who would go to the church with Foliott. Just twelve of us, all told.

"But where's the bridegroom?" asked Miss Deveen, when we reached her house.

"He can't get up until late to-night; perhaps not until to-morrow morning," pouted Helen.

The dinner-table was a downright merry one, and we did not seem to miss Captain Foliott. Afterwards, when Sir John had got his whist-table—with my lady, Miss Deveen, and the grey-haired curate, who had dropped in—we amused ourselves with music and games in the other room.

"What do you think of the bridegroom-to-be, Johnny Ludlow?" suddenly demanded Miss Cattledon, who had sat down by me. "I hear you saw him at Malvern."

"Think of him! Oh, he—he is a very fine man; good-looking, and that."

"That I have seen for myself," retorted Cattledon, pinching her hands round her thin waist. "When he was staying in London, two or three weeks ago, we spent an evening in Gloucester Place. Do you *like* him?"

She put the "like" so very pointedly, staring into my face at the time, that I was rather taken aback. I did *not* like Captain Foliott: but there was no particular necessity for telling her so.

"I like him—pretty well, Miss Cattledon."

"Well, I do not, Johnny Ludlow. I fancy he has a temper; I'm sure he is not good-natured; and I—I don't think he will make a very good husband."

"That will be a pity. Helen is fond of him."

Miss Cattledon coughed significantly. "Is she! Helen is fond of him in-so-far as that she is eager to be married—all girls are—and the match with Captain Foliott is an advantageous one. But if you think she cares for him in any other way, Johnny Ludlow, you are quite mistaken. Helen Whitney is no more in love with Captain Foliott than you are in love with me."

At which I laughed.

"Very few girls marry for love," she went on. "They fall in love, generally speaking, with the wrong person."

"Then what do they marry for?"

"For the sake of being married. With the fear of old maidism staring them in the face, they are ready, silly things, to snap at almost any offer they get. Go up to Helen Whitney now, tell her she is destined to live in single blessedness, and she would be fit to fret herself into a fever. Every girl would not be, mind you: but there are girls and girls."

Well, perhaps Miss Cattledon was not far wrong. I did not think as she did then, and laughed again in answer: but I have learned more of the world and its ways since.

In every corner of the house went Helen's eyes when we got back to Gloucester Place, but they could not see Captain Foliott. She had been hoping against hope.

Wednesday. Young women, bringing in huge band-boxes, were perpetually ringing at the door, and by and by we got treated to a sight of the finery. Enough gowns and bonnets to set up a shop were spread out in Helen's room. The wedding-dress lay on the bed: a glistening white silk, with a veil and wreath beside it. Near to it was the dress she would go away in to Dover, the first halting-stage on their trip to Paris: a quiet shot-silk, Lady Whitney called it, blue one way, pink another. Shot, or not shot, it was uncommonly pretty. Straw bonnets were the mode in those days, and Helen's, perched above her travelling-dress, had white ribbons on it and a white veil—which was the mode for brides also. I am sure Helen, in her vanity, thought more of the things than of the bridegroom.

But she thought of him also. Especially when the morning went on and did not bring him. Twelve o'clock struck, and Sir John Whitney's solicitor, Mr. Hill, who had come up on purpose, was punctual to his appointment. Sir John had thought it right that his own solicitor should be present at the reading and signing of the settlements, to see that they were drawn up properly.

So there they sat in the back parlour, which had been converted into a business room for the occasion, waiting for Captain Foliott and the deeds with what patience they had. At one o'clock, when they came in to luncheon, Sir John was looking a little blue; and he remarked that Captain Foliott, however busy he might have been, should have stretched a point to get off in time. Appointments, especially important ones, were appointments, and ought to be kept.

For it was conclusively thought that the delay was caused by the Captain's having been unable to get off the previous day, and that he was travelling up now.

So Mr. Hill waited, and Sir John waited, and the rest of us waited, Helen especially; and thus the afternoon passed in waiting. Helen was more fidgety than a hen with one chick: darting to the window each instant, peeping down the staircase at the sound of every ring.

Dinner-time; and no appearance of Captain Foliott. After dinner; and still the same. Mary Seabright, a merry girl, told Helen that her lover was like the knight in the old ballad—he loved and he rode away. There was a good deal of laughing, and somebody called for the song, "The Mistletoe Bough." Of course it was all in jest: as each minute passed, we expected the next would bring Captain Foliott.

Not until ten o'clock did Mr. Hill leave, with the understanding that he should return the next morning at the same hour. The servants were beginning to lay the breakfast-table in the dining-room, for a lot of sweet dishes had been brought in from the pastry-

cook's, and Lady Whitney thought they had better be put on the table at once. In the afternoon we had tied the cards together—"Mr. and Mrs. Richard Foliott"—with white satin ribbon, sealed them up in their envelopes with white wax, and directed them ready for the post on the morrow.

At twelve o'clock we went upstairs to bed; and until that hour had still been expecting Captain Foliott.

"I feel positive some dreadful accident has happened," whispered Helen to me as we said good night, her usual bright colour faded to paleness. "If I thought it was carelessness that is causing the delay, as they are cruelly saying, I—I should never forgive him."

"Wait a minute," said Bill to me, touching Tod also. "Let them go on."

"Are you not coming, William?"

"In two minutes, mother."

"I don't like this," began Bill, speaking to us both over the bed-candles, for the other lights were out. "I'll be hanged if I think he means to turn up at all!"

"But why should he not?"

"Who is to know? Why has he not turned up already? I can tell you that it seems to me uncommonly strange. Half a dozen times to-night I had a great mind to call my father out and tell him all about what you heard in the train, Tod. It is so extraordinary for a man, coming up to his wedding, not to appear: especially when he is bringing the settlements."

Neither of us spoke. What, indeed, could we say to so unpleasant a topic? Bill went on again.

"If he were a man in business, as his uncle old Foliott is, I could readily understand that interests connected with it might delay him, detain him till the last moment. But he is not; he has not an earthly thing to do."

"Perhaps his lawyers are in fault," cried Tod. "If they are backward with the deeds of settlement——"

"The deeds were ready a week ago. Foliott said so in writing to my father."

A silence ensued, rendering the street noises more audible. Suddenly there came a sound of a horse and cab dashing along, and it pulled up at our door. Foliott, of course.

Down we went, helter-skelter, out on the pavement. The servants, busy in the dining-room still, came running to the steps. A gentleman, getting out of the cab with a portmanteau, stared, first at us, then at the house.

"This is not right," said he to the driver, after looking about him.

"It's next door but one."

"This is the number you told me, sir."

"Ah, yes. Made a mistake."

But so sure did it seem to us that this late and hurried traveller

must be, at least, some one connected with Captain Foliott, if not himself, that it was only when he and his luggage had disappeared within the house, and the door was shut, and the cab gone away, that we realised the disappointment, and the vague feeling of discomfort it left. The servants went in. We strolled to the opposite side of the street, unconsciously hoping that luck might bring another cab with the right man in it.

"Look there!" whispered Bill, pointing upwards.

The room over the drawing-room was Lady Whitney's; the room above that, the girls'. Leaning out at the window, gazing now up the street, now down it, was Helen, her eyes restless, her face pale and woe-begone in the bright moonlight.

It was a sad night for Helen Whitney. She did not attempt to undress, as we knew later, but kept her post at that weary window. Every cab or carriage that rattled into view was watched by her with eager, feverish anxiety. But not one halted at the house, not one contained Captain Foliott. Helen Whitney will never forget that unhappy night of tumultuous feeling and its intolerable suspense.

But here was the wedding-morning come, and no bridegroom. The confectioners were rushing in with more dishes, and the dress-makers to put the finishing touches to Helen. Lady Whitney was just off her head: doubtful whether to order all the paraphernalia away, or whether Captain Foliott might not come yet. In the midst of the confusion a little gentleman arrived at the house and asked for Sir John. Sir John and he had a long conference, shut in alone: and when they at length came out Sir John's nose was of a dark purple tipped with white. The visitor was George Foliott, the mill-owner: returned since some few days from the Cape.

And the tale he unfolded would have struck dismay to the nose of many a wiser man than was poor Sir John. The scamp spoken of in the train was Richard Foliott; and a nice scamp he turned out to be. Upon Mr. Foliott's return to Milltown the prospective wedding had come to his ears, with all the villainy encompassing it; he had at once taken means to prevent Mr. Richard's carrying it out, and had now come up to enlighten Sir John Whitney.

Richard Foliott had been a scamp at heart from his boyhood; but he had contrived to keep well before the world. Over and over again had Mr. Foliott paid his debts and set him on his legs again. Captain Foliott had told the Whitneys that he quitted the army by the wish of his friends: he quitted it because he dared not stay in it. Before Mr. Foliott departed for the Cape he had thrown Richard off; obliged to do it. His fond, doting, foolish mother had reduced herself to poverty, helping him. The estate, once worth ten thousand pounds, which he had made a pretence of settling upon Helen, belonged to his mother and was mortgaged about sixteen deep. He dared not go much abroad for fear of arrest, especially in London. This and a great deal more was disclosed by Mr. Foliott to Sir John; who sat

and gasped, and rubbed his face, and wished his old friend Todhetley was at hand, and thanked God for the escape of Helen.

"He will never be better," affirmed Mr. Foliott, "be you very sure of that. He is innately bad, and the pain he has inflicted upon me for years has made me old before my time. But—forgive me, Sir John, for saying so—I cannot think you exercised cautious discretion in accepting him so easily for your daughter."

"I had no suspicion, you see," returned poor Sir John. "How could I have any? Your nephew, and Lord Riverside's nephew——"

"Riverside's nephew he called himself, did he! The old man is ninety, as I daresay you know, and never stirs from his home in the extreme north of Scotland. Some twenty years ago, he fell in with the sister of Richard's mother (she was a governess in a family up there), and married her. That's how he comes to be Lord Riverside's 'nephew.' But they have never met in their lives."

"Oh, dear!" bemoaned Sir John. "What a villain!—and what a blessed escape! He made a great point of Helen's bit of money, three thousand pounds, not being tied up before the marriage. I suppose he wanted to get it into his own hands."

"Of course he did."

"And to pay his debts with it—as far as it would go."

"*Pay his debts with it!*" exclaimed Mr. Foliott. "Why, my good sir, it would take thirty thousand to pay them. He would just have squandered it away in Paris, at his gaming-tables, and what not; and then have asked you to keep him. Miss Whitney is well quit of him: and I'm thankful I came back in time to save her."

Fine news to tell to Helen! Deeply mortifying to have ordered a wedding-breakfast and wedding things in general when there was no wedding to be. The salt tears were running down Lady Whitney's homely cheeks, as Miss Deveen drove up.

Mr. Foliott asked to see Helen. All he said to her we never knew—but there's no doubt he was as kind as a father.

"He is a wicked, despicable man," sobbed Helen.

"He is all that, and more," assented Mr. Foliott. "You may be thankful your whole life long for having escaped him. And, my dear, if it will at all help you to bear the smart, I may tell you that you are not the first young lady by two or three he has served, or tried to serve, in precisely the same way. And to one of them he behaved more wickedly than I care to repeat to you!"

"But," ruefully answered poor Helen, softly sobbing, "I don't suppose it came so near with any of them as the very morning."

And that was the end of Helen Whitney's wedding.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

AMSTERDAM, the capital of Holland, lays claim to pretensions of its own, as it is the duty of the chief town of every respectable country to do. One hears of it as "a city built upon piles." But if the simple-minded traveller, by this description, expects to find the streets and houses of Amsterdam elevated upon numerous perpendicular columns, through which he may gaze as into the "long-drawn aisles" of a forest, or the ruined pillars of a classic temple, his anticipations will not be realised. We may at once state that the houses of Amsterdam do not bear any resemblance to a stilted mountebank. The houses, however, do as a fact rest upon piles, to a great extent, not only in Amsterdam but throughout Holland; and this will explain why so many of them have not fulfilled the hopes of their first architects, but have turned to crooked ways, and ceased to be upright before the world.

In Amsterdam, especially, very many of them have long bid farewell to the perpendicular style. Some lean forward alarmingly; others bend towards each other, as though a long and close companionship had ended in deep affection: again, others look as if a push would send them to a last and safer resting-place in the bed of a neighbouring canal. Some of the streets are so narrow that from a top front window you can very comfortably shake hands with an opposite neighbour: a juxtaposition, possibly, at times more convenient than agreeable. If a waggon or carriage comes rattling down the street at a startling pace, and accompanied by a noise as of many waters, the nervous and terrified pedestrian must rush into a friendly doorway, and take refuge until the danger has passed onwards.

In point of fact, Holland may be said to possess two capitals: one of fashion, the other of trade and commerce. The Hague represents the former, Amsterdam the latter. The aspect of each town corresponds with the ends to which it is destined. The one has a certain amount of stately repose and unruffled dignity due to the vicinity of royalty; the other is full of life and activity, and the more vulgar and hardening pursuits of money getting.

Amsterdam is the largest town in Holland, and is built in the shape of a crescent or horse-shoe. The visitor may discover this fact for himself by means of his guide-book; or from the summit of one of the towers; or in the course of a morning's perambulation through the town, when the information will certainly be volunteered by one or other of its intelligent inhabitants. It is situated at the influx of the Amstel into the Y, the latter being an arm of the Zuyder Zee, and forming the harbour. Hence the name Amsterdam—the dam of the Amstel. The locks are of enormous strength, to resist the inroads

of the sea; and the immense precautions taken are not without reason, for the streets of Amsterdam are much below sea level. The docks and quays are large and important, and capable of accommodating a thousand vessels.

Amsterdam was not always the place of importance it now is. In the twelfth century it consisted merely of a few fishermen's huts. About the year 1204 the dam was constructed which gives the name to the town. In the fourteenth century the town began to grow in importance, and in the sixteenth century it had risen to eminence. It has been fortunate enough to retain its prosperity up to the present day. In commercial importance, in wealth, in its amount of trade, it holds a prominent position in Europe. Its industries are numerous—sugar and camphor refineries, manufactories of tobacco and cobalt blue, large breweries, and diamond mills.

Amsterdam has its various quarters. Its fashionable and select quarter, which is naturally very exclusive and turns up its nose at anything in the shape of trade below a banker or a rich shipowner; its commercial quarter, its manufacturing quarter, its shipping quarter; its Jews' quarter, highly distinguished for its dirt and its fried fish; its busy quarter, and its idle quarter. The system of drainage is most defective, and canals intersect the town perhaps more completely than they do any other town in Holland. All the quarters just enumerated possess the one common feature of canals; and all the canals possess the one prevailing, abounding, and most unmistakable characteristic of bad smells. It would be utterly impossible to describe the smells of Amsterdam. Those of Cologne have passed into a proverb: those of Amsterdam ought to possess a history of their own. It is true we were there at an unfavourable time; at the end of a long, intensely hot summer, when the rains had set in; but anything more terrible than the reality could not be imagined. And yet they are considered healthy, for the Dutch doctors send patients here in order that they may inhale the odours.

Having passed a large proportion of my days on the Continent: where, go where you will, bad smells are seldom at a premium: I was able, with a tolerable grace, to submit to this nuisance, in which I almost seemed to recognise an old friend. A., on the other hand, whose experience had not permitted him to imagine anything more violent than a midsummer-day on the Thames, rebelled fiercely, and almost knocked under to the enemy. He found it stronger than his powers of endurance. On nearing a bridge he would rush over it as if pursued by the plague. Every night he made up his mind that he would leave the next day, and every morning the artistic attractions of the place proved too powerful for him, and his departure was postponed.

Certain portions of Amsterdam retain a greater air of antiquity than almost any other town in Holland. These portions are very picturesque. Tall, gabled, ancient houses; groups and clusters that

you come upon accidentally, and that make you feel, "This is Holland; this almost comes up to one's idea of what the place ought to be." And their tendency to diverge from the straight line, to lean backwards or forwards, to the right or the left, increases the effect. Particularly quaint and curious are some portions of the Jews' quarter: though as much distinguished for dirt as many other parts of the town are for cleanliness. The Jews in Amsterdam are a race of strength and multitude. They abound, and are not to be mistaken when seen.

Wandering out one evening we surveyed the town by the light of a brilliant moon. The scene was imposing. All the peculiar features of the architecture were thrown out; the quaint outlines, the



AMSTERDAM.

gabled roofs, the leaning tendency of many of the houses. The new paint, the modern window-sashes, white, yellow, and red, were subdued and concealed. Deep shadows were cast by the moonlight, and marked outlines, which all gave a weird and ghastly effect to the old town; a semi-ruined appearance especially picturesque.

Suddenly we came upon the quay—one of the most interesting parts of Amsterdam—and across the water the moon threw one of the brightest of silver tracks I had ever seen. It was as if Dutch fairies were holding high revelry, and had lighted up their palaces for the occasion. We had only to fancy strains of fairy music and myriads of fairy feet dancing beneath the waters in a mazy whirl, and the effect was complete. Forests of masts stood out in the moonlight; here a boat was gliding away like an uncanny object endowed with life, making for sea; there another was floating up to her moorings: a type of life if one cared to moralise; the constant incoming

and outgoing; the taking up and shuffling off this mortal coil; an empty place speedily filled up, and the outward-bound forgotten as soon as out of sight.

We crossed the water over the long bridge, and got right away from the hum and bustle of the town; away from people and houses into comparative desertion. A solitary railway station that seemed to have done its work for the night, for the officials were absent, and the lamps extinguished. Here all was dark and dismal, and it was difficult to feel certain that the next step would not land us in a bath more cold than comfortable. So, unable to pass the time here in a profitable contemplation of human nature, we retraced our steps into the town. In one of the streets a barrel organ was grinding a dance tune, and boys and girls, young men and women, were



AMSTERDAM, SHOWING BACK OF THE BIBLE HOTEL, AND STEEPLE OF THE OLD CHURCH.

taking the opportunity of giving themselves a gratuitous lesson in the graceful art. Really gracefully they tripped it. Every now and again a vehicle came rattling along and scattered the busy dancers into doorways, whence they issued as soon as the danger had passed, and took up the thread of their feet's discourse where they had laid it down.

Previously to going to Amsterdam we had been informed that its best hotel was the Old Bible; so named from the fact of the first Bible having been translated there into Dutch, or some such reason; and an old Bible is shown to visitors in the coffee-room. Accordingly we alighted at the hospitable doors of the Old Bible Hotel. The first thing that struck me on going up the staircase was a coloured window half-way up the landing, and bearing the inscription: Bible Hotel, 5th chap. I. Timothy, 23rd verse. We leave

the reader to turn to the reference for himself. It was, at any rate, not inapplicable to the window of an inn.

Not a word can be said against the hotel itself, or the comfort of the establishment. Everything was well done; the rooms were good; the table d'hôte was excellent and abundant, its only fault a want of variety; the host was civil and anxious to further the comforts of his guests. Still, though a good and comfortable hotel, we were misinformed as to its being the best in Amsterdam. And it possessed, to a light sleeper, a fatal drawback. It was situated in a narrow street, and the noise at night was overpowering and incessant until two o'clock in the morning.

To begin with, we were close to a church—the Old Church, built in the 14th century, and possessing three of the finest painted windows in all Europe—which rang out the time every quarter of an hour in loud discordant chimes; each quarter possessing its own tune; so that every tune came over twenty-four times in the corresponding number of hours; ninety-six airs in the evening and the morning that compose the day. The bells were cracked and dismal, and the jumble of sound was so great that it was impossible to make out the slightest melody. “That tune, sir,” said the guide to me one morning, “is called ‘Behold, he cometh!’ a very beautiful air out of the Messiah; by a celebrated composer named Mr. Handel.”

I was too polite to let him see that the latter part of the information was not altogether needed; and racked my memory for a solo or chorus in the oratorio that commenced with the imposing words “Behold, he cometh!” In vain. Day after day, hour after hour, the air haunted me almost to the verge of madness: until at length I discovered that there really was an attempt on the part of the distracting bells to give forth an imitation of “See, the Conquering Hero comes!” It has already been remarked that the Dutch are not a musical nation; they are very great in chimes, but their chimes are by no means great in themselves.

That same morning I was making inquiries about an English church in Amsterdam, of this same intelligent guide. “We had one, sir,” said he, “but we have one no longer. The clergyman could not get enough customers, and he had to shut it up, and go back to England!”

But to return to the hotel, for we have not yet done with the noises.

To a wakeful sleeper these incessant chimes were in the highest degree exasperating. If a pillow thrown at the steeple could have stopped them, there would have been a long account to settle for bed furniture on leaving the premises. But what was still worse than the chimes was the noise in the streets at night. It was a very narrow street, as I have already remarked, paved with uneven stones, and echoing. A cab or omnibus coming down would rattle along with a sound like a whole charge of artillery. About eleven o'clock, tired with the day's work—sight-seeing and picture-gazing, as everyone knows, is

the hardest work imaginable—I would retire to my well-earned couch, to seek a well-merited repose. Alas, there is no peace in this world for the wicked. Precisely at that hour, the cafés would commence to send forth their freight of noisy drunken men and women, of the very lowest description conceivable, and until two o'clock in the morning it was useless to hope for sleep. These Bacchanalian worshippers would go marching up and down in bands of sixes and twelves, shouting and singing at the very tops of their voices; such voices as belong only to very coarse natures, or only the Dutch possess. Some people have the happy faculty of getting used to things; the Scotch are especially clever at “adapting themselves to circumstances.” If they cannot get wine, they will drink water; if they cannot afford to idle, they will work. Unfortunately I cannot boast of this stoical nature. A noise that worries me one day will worry me more the next; and a month’s accumulation of such horrors would go far towards landing me where the wicked cease from troubling. I can quite understand how poor Leech died from street organs. I should do the same under similar circumstances. The consequence was that the Bible Hotel was to me, from external, not internal causes, a veritable house of penance.

The intelligent reader will possibly wonder why I did not change my quarters from the front of the hotel to the back, where probably there would have been less noise. Less, certainly. But the back of the hotel overhung the canal, as the accompanying illustration will demonstrate, and I preferred the noise to the terrible odours rising “like an exhalation” from the waters. Of the two evils the former, bad as it was, was yet the minor.

There was still another nuisance, common no doubt to all the hotels in Amsterdam—mosquitoes. These were a perfect and positive plague. They tormented me for a day or two, and then left me in peace; but A. fell a victim to them from the first day to the last. The faces and hands of all the visitors were covered with the bites of these venomous insects; large red spots that stung and irritated, and utterly took away what beauty the face might originally possess. It was an ordinary thing for the visitors to meet at the breakfast-table and compare notes; sympathise with whilst laughing at each other’s ludicrous appearance. Night after night I was wont to perambulate my room, a candle in one hand, an instrument of vengeance in the other, and slaughter as many of the enemy as the most minute investigation could discover. A. would do likewise, but to him it seemed of little use, for the next morning, and morning after morning, he would appear a martyr to mosquitoes.

Most people stay in Amsterdam two days at most. We remained much longer, and made it our head-quarters whilst taking excursions in the neighbourhood. A. found so much artistic matter to his taste, so much occupation for his pencil, that I, whose sole object was amusement, took many of these excursions alone. By degrees, and in spite of the noises, I grew quite fond of my room. There

was an opposite neighbour whose daily work amused us a great deal. He was lodged on the third floor, and made glass bottles and tubes, and other curious articles. His fire would glow to a white heat, and he would bend over his work in a skull-cap, the glare reflecting itself vividly upon his prominent features until he almost looked like a wizard discovering secrets in alchemy or searching for the philosopher's stone.

We, too, seemed a puzzle and a mystery to the old sage. Evidently not there for business purposes—as the greater part of the travellers who alighted at the hotel with huge trunks and boxes of goods and merchandise—he yet wondered what kept us so long in a town whose resources of amusement might be exhausted in a period of forty-eight hours. Then I would disappear for two or three days, and he would no doubt fancy he had got rid of his opposite neighbour, who watched his work with persistent curiosity—and lo! on the third or fourth morning, to his evident astonishment, there would be a reappearance.

The people of the table d'hôte were a constant source of amusement, a veritable study of character. One man was the precise image of Lord Dundreary, even to the eyeglass, without which he appeared incapable of finding the way to his mouth. The English were many of them veritable curiosities. One party of tourists gave much amusement during the latter portion of our stay. They had come, as was easily discovered, from the North of England, and were going on to Germany. It was their habit all to talk at once, and in loud tones, and their capacity for rushing about was as great as it was inexhaustible. They would retire to bed at midnight, and rise again at six, rather than lose the smallest object of attraction; and at eight o'clock in the morning they might be seen tearing about the streets of Amsterdam, as if their very lives depended upon perpetual motion.

It has been frequently remarked, and it is a singular but certain fact, that the specimens of English people we encounter abroad are more often than not of a very unusual and uninteresting type. They are caricatures of our nation, and many a time we have to blush for their unparalleled want of taste in dress. Who and what many of them are, whence they come, and where they hide themselves when they return to their native shores, must for ever remain one of those mysteries that have baffled philosophers and driven sages to despair.

Amsterdam has long been famous for its diamond-cutting, and with anticipations of pleasure I started one morning on a visit of inspection to one of their largest mills. I was signally disappointed. The process is uninteresting, and indeed almost invisible. The small stone, unattractive in its natural state, is fixed into what appears to be a lump of clay; it is then held with instruments to a wheel turning with amazing speed; and the process of cutting and polishing is gradually accomplished. The whole thing is so simple that the works are scarcely worth a visit.

Another manufactory would possess far greater charms to some

people. If the Dutch are famous for their schiedam, they are equally so for their curaçoa: a much more delicious decoction: though if taken in large quantities, very detrimental to health. The most celebrated makers are Wynandt and Co., a house famous all over the world. Their place is a small, unpretending-looking street, where you may go and give an order for 1,000 dozen, and have it speedily executed, or you may invest a penny in a small glass of it: or of any other liqueur the world contains.

Curaçoa is of three kinds; red, white, and green. The latter is exquisite in colour, though suggestive of prussic acid and other deadly poisons. But, once tasted, you are bound to return to the charge. It has less fire than the red, and is less soft and fâde than the white. A. went in so strongly for curaçoa that I began to have doubts as to whether his bites were all to be laid to the charge of the mosquitoes; and it was not until I had limited the supply to something less than a gallon a day that I was satisfied the wicked insects had not been unduly abused.

We were not very long in discovering that tea and not coffee was the pleasanter and more universal beverage in Holland. And yet their process of making tea is a very ceremonious one, and not the best in the world.

If you take coffee for breakfast, it is brought in hot and fragrant, in a bright silver pot; its very appearance is exhilarating, and you sit down at peace with all the world, and in a mood to grant even an enemy any favour he may demand. It is not until you come to drink the coffee that you frequently discover it is by no means first-rate. The making of tea is another and much more serious matter.

The waiter brings in a copper scuttle filled with glowing braize upon which reposes a copper kettle. The teapot is placed before you, and the tea is enclosed in a glass-stopper bottle. The quantity given for each person is by no means illiberal: the quality excellent. The one drawback to this process is that the water seldom boils. You wait; you lift up the lid of the kettle, and perhaps get an eye full of hot steam for your pains; you examine the expiring braize. At length you discover that the water is getting cold and your temper short: and in a weak moment you appeal to the waiter.

Vain appeal. He cannot and will not understand the plain and simple mystery of tea-making; the absolute necessity that the water shall boil. It boiled in the kitchen—surely that is enough! In the end he rushes off with the scuttle and disappears; reappears, red in the face, with another of the same description, and places it beside you, looking a mild protest. In despair you seize the kettle and make the tea before the water further recedes from that degree of temperature known as boiling-point.

Nevertheless, tea, and not coffee, is the staple beverage of Holland: and here we have one more instance, amongst many, in which the Dutch resemble the English.

Amsterdam is rich in art treasures. The picture gallery is perhaps the best in Holland ; but the rooms are so badly constructed that the beauty of the paintings is often lost. The palace is a large square edifice of stone, but with little beauty of architecture. It stands on 13,659 piles driven 70 feet deep into the ground. It was originally built for the town-hall, but was turned into a palace by Bonaparte. Some of the state rooms are fitted up with white marble, and the ball-



AMSTERDAM.

room is said to be the largest in Europe : 120 feet long, 60 feet wide, and about 100 feet high.

It was our fate to be in Amsterdam during the time when serious riots were expected. The Dutch have a fête once a year, which is called the Kermes : a similar fête to the Ducasse of the French and Flemish towns. Booths of every description are erected in a portion of the town devoted to that purpose, where the fair is held. All the servants and humbler orders of the place have two days' holiday, during which time they are completely their own masters, and have perfect liberty both throughout the day and throughout the night.

They make the most of their holiday, and for the time being become insensibly riotous and careless of consequences.

Some years ago, the moral influence of the Kermes upon the town of Rotterdam being very disastrous, the corporation suddenly and summarily put an end to it for ever, and thus deprived the people of their holiday. A wise proceeding, but those most concerned were the last to perceive the wisdom. They rebelled, and a very serious riot and a good deal of bloodshed resulted.

Amsterdam, following in the wake of her sister city, determined to do likewise, but in a more leisurely manner. A proclamation was issued to the effect that in five years' time the Kermes would come to an end and be abolished. For five years they might make the best and the worst of their holiday; then bid it a long farewell. The years came to an end, and the period for the abolition of the Kermes arrived during our stay in Amsterdam.

The town was in a ferment. The respectable inhabitants were trembling; some fled to other and quieter places of refuge: the lower orders were evidently preparing to be riotous and unruly. The town was gradually filled with soldiers, horse and foot. Everything indicated serious doings. A caution was issued by the mayor that no one should be out in the streets after ten o'clock at night, except at his own peril. Altogether the social atmosphere assumed a very pretty appearance. A rumour went forth one morning that during the night the mayor had eloped by his back door; but, as usual, the worthy man had been maliciously calumniated. At that very moment the courageous potentate was transacting business in the town hall, bold as a lion, and ready for martyrdom—or what was more probable, an escape into the country if it could be managed. This was found impracticable; and the worthy hero was kept a prisoner in the town hall for ten days and nights by the infuriated mob, shivering and shaking in his shoes, and expecting every moment to be his last.

But it turned out, after all, an affair of great cry and little wool. The Dutch no doubt are as fond of their own blood and their own lives as they are of their golden guldens. As soon as they saw the cavalry with their drawn swords and their ferocious countenances;



DUTCH UNDERTAKER.

their black moustaches working up and down in the most terrific manner, like the jaws of a tiger thirsting for blood; they fell back to a respectable distance, turned tail, and pocketed their grievances. A little blood was spilt; a very few lives were lost; an immense deal of noise and riot and clamour took place for some days; but it was bark and not bite, and there the matter ended. The mayor at the expiration of ten days gave up shivering like an aspen, and became once more bold as a lion. The cadaverous hue of his countenance was put down to anxiety for the welfare of his people, not to any personal fear for himself.

It was my fortune one morning to witness a Dutch wedding in the New Church (built 1408) on the Dam, near the palace. A very singular performance was this wedding. It was a private affair, and at first the griffins guarding the doors would not allow me to enter. But upon discovering that I was a foreigner they exercised their courtesy and I was admitted. I went up to the portion of the church consecrated to weddings—a sort of west-end chancel surrounded by high railings and enclosed in great brass gates of fine workmanship. In this enclosure about four-and-twenty seats were ranged round in the form of a horse-shoe; the middle of the range consisting of a sofa for the bride and bridegroom. Friends of the happy couple who were mere lookers on were shown into seats that ran round the enclosure like stalls. Into one of these I was admitted.

After waiting for some time the organ struck up a lively strain, and having played for about ten minutes, a rustle, a tinkling bell, a hurrying and commotion amidst the vergers—or whatever they may style themselves—and the wedding party filed in. The men were most of them dressed in tail coats and white ties, conspicuous amongst them the bridegroom. The ladies wore bonnets and their ordinary attire, only a few appearing to have had new costumes for the occasion. The bride wore a pale silk dress and white net veil, with a wreath of flowers upon her head. She was really pretty, but pale and melancholy looking. The bridegroom had not been equally favoured by nature. His real and unmistakable ugliness (scarcely a polite word to use, but the only expression applicable to the present instance) marred the whole thing. The bridal party took their seats in solemn state and silence; all the ladies on the one side, all the gentlemen on the other. The ladies crossed their hands and looked conscious and demure; the gentlemen seemed to think they were in for a very good thing—probably the breakfast. Then entered the minister in a black gown, and immediately commenced a very violent and graphic discourse upon the pleasures, duties, and responsibilities of married life. Several of the unmarried ladies sighed and were visibly affected at his eloquence, thinking, no doubt, of the days of their youth, when they too were full of a hope not destined to be fulfilled. At the mention of the responsibilities of married life, the

bride's mother shook her bonnet until the feathers nodded and the beads rattled, and her eyes rained showers of tears.

Towards the end of the discourse the bride and bridegroom advanced alone, and knelt for a few moments before the minister, and then returned to their seats. After this two separate collections were made for the poor, and the marriage was over. During the entire ceremony the bridal party had never moved, either to stand up, or kneel down, or unite in prayer, with the slight exception mentioned of the bride and groom. The whole party filed out again to the lively strains of the splendid organ. As far as I can remember, no ring was put upon the bride's finger in church.

There was something cold and unsatisfactory about the ceremony, to a mere looker on and a stranger. And somehow, as I left the church, I could not help thinking of a marriage that had taken place in my own beloved England, where the ceremony commenced with a hymn, and the clerk, agreeably to vary matters according to his own taste and pleasure, gave out the first line in the following words:—

“DELUDED SOULS, THAT DREAM OF HEAVEN !”

In that New Church in Amsterdam, there is one of the most beautifully-carved pulpits in the whole of Holland, perhaps in the world. And—it has escaped the paint brush.

That morning, on issuing from the church and crossing the Dam (the chief square of the town), I was astonished to see the Exchange crowded with boys, and to hear such a sound issuing forth of fun and laughter, shouting and hurraing, drums, trumpets, fifes, and shrill penny whistles, as I had never before heard or conceived, and hope fervently never to hear again. In a moment of aberration I went up the steps into the interior. All parts of the great building were crammed to suffocation with urchins. Thousands of them were shouting and shrieking at the tops of their Dutch voices, beating their drums, and blowing their awful trumpets, rushing about like little imps, and scratching their rattles upon the backs of such bewildered folk as had the temerity to venture into their midst. For a moment I felt my senses reel. Then, recovering, I escaped from the place by patience and stratagem, and fled wildly from the Bedlam.

It appears that about the year 1660, an orphan boy, playing near the spot, discovered a plot of the Spaniards to blow up the place by means of a barge of gunpowder. In commemoration of this event, the merchants decreed that for ever after, on the first day of the fair, the Exchange should be given over to the boys of the town as a playground. And well they make use of their privilege, combining, in a few hours, the fun and frolic, the noise, uproar, and madness of 365 days. Of late years the merchants have endeavoured to put an end to the nuisance, but without success. Apparently it is more difficult to deal with boys than with men.

Whilst on the subject of boys it is worthy of record how very

curious it is to see the orphans belonging to some of the orphan asylums, as they go along the streets. Those of the Protestant Burgher School wear a costume that is a mixture of black and red; the jackets of the boys, the petticoats of the girls. They are red down the one side and black down the other. It gives them a startling appearance, more singular than picturesque. The girls of the Roman Catholic Orphanage are dressed in black with a white band round their head. One of the most curious costumes is that of a Dutch undertaker, who goes about in a tail coat, breeches, buckled shoes, and a cocked hat, from which streamers are suspended in a fashion far more suggestive of the humorous and the laughable than of the gravity and solemnity befitting that sombre and melancholy personage.



JEW'S QUARTER, AMSTERDAM.

Amsterdam is famous for its many charitable institutions, some of which are well worth a visit. When ruin was prophesied for the city from an anticipated attack of Louis XIV.'s armies, Charles II. exclaimed: "I am of opinion that Providence will preserve Amsterdam, if it were only for the great charity they have for their poor."

I have enlarged upon the virtues of Amsterdam to a much greater length than was my intention. I had wished to carry the reader to Haarlem, with its world-famed organ and picturesque town hall: to take him up the canal to Zaandam, once inhabited by Peter the Great, whose house is still exhibited. But these and many other excursions; including the quaint, curious, out-of-the-world Island of Marken; must form the theme of another paper.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

MEMORY

WHERE good and evil hours
 Are heaping fruits and flowers,
 And buds—in her dim bowers to blossom never !
 Under a dusky screen
 Of luminous evergreen
 Dwells Memory, gazing on the Past for ever.

The boughs that arch above her,
 Are dear to friend and lover,
 The tangled hazel cover is quick with sighs :
 One broken violet,
 With tears and kisses wet,
 Is dearer to her heart than sacrifice.

The fields of long ago
 In shadowy sunlight glow,
 Whence words and whispers flow, and lovers talk,
 And friends—a shining throng,
 When gazed upon too long,
 Turning to ghosts—together smile and walk.

Her wood-encumbered vales
 Are full of nightingales,
 When evening's planet pales the purple pines ;
 The fields her footsteps stir
 Are warm with lavender,
 Made dark by juniper, and ivy vines.

Dark wood of mystic wonder,
 Oh, how much of love we squander,
 Where our buried hopes yet wander to the last ;
 Under faintly flushing skies,
 Looking love into our eyes,
 From fields of Paradise—or of the Past.

O fair with tender fancies,
 O wild with youth's romances,
 O dark with purple pansies, and rich blooms—
 Here—where no winds are blowing,
 Are tears for ever flowing,
 And mosses greenly growing over tombs !

Thus in a dusky screen
 Of luminous evergreen
 Dwells Memory blinded to all new endeavour,
 Because for her no flowers
 Bloom in the future's bowers,
 The light of bygone hours burns on for ever.

C. M. GEMMER. (*Gerda Fay.*)

THE CHARM.

"TERESITA! ah, Teresita!" sang young Jermyn, as Thérèse Van Dest came into the room.

She tossed her head at him and then made a delicious little curtsy for his benefit.

"Come, Thérèse; come and finish this trimming: you know I shall be waiting for it."

The speaker was the elder sister, Louise. She spoke rather sharply, wishing William Jermyn anywhere else, hindrance that he was to all useful occupation.

Thérèse, thus admonished, came humming to her work as a bee to a flower; and in another moment was deep in the mysteries of ruffle and fringe.

"I am to have the corsage heart-shaped, you know, Louise; and the sleeves are to be trimmed in the shape of a Maltese cross—so," fashioning the muslin she held to suit her words and to indicate her ideas to Miss Van Dest.

"What do you know of Maltese crosses?" asked Jermyn, drawing nearer with quizzical interest. "Do you call that a Maltese cross, Teresita?" and his mischievous hand, touching, scattered at once her fashioned muslin. Thérèse left the print of three little teeth upon the said mischievous hand; whereat the young man cried out in simulated pain. In the next moment he was pressing his lips where hers had been.

"A kiss for a blow, you know, Teresita!" and he glanced at her a swift, dangerous glance, over Louise's intervening head.

"William Jermyn!" and Louise turned severely towards him, missing Teresita's blush, which Jermyn would not have missed for the world. "William Jermyn, go away, I beg of you, until Thérèse can finish what she has to do. You are like two children, both of you: idling when you should be at your work."

"Don't talk of work, Madame Louise, I entreat; it's a disagreeable subject."

He laughed good-humouredly. Louise was so staid, several years older than Thérèse, that he sometimes called her "Madame."

"How do you suppose you can get on, William Jermyn?" she asked. "Wasting your time here when you ought to be poring over your law books?"

"I have been poring over them all the morning, and I came here, done to death, for a little life-giving recreation."

"But you must not hinder us," returned Louise, gravely. "If Thérèse is to go to this party to-night her dress must be finished. You know we can no longer afford to pay a dressmaker."

The words brought Mr. Jermyn to his senses. He was sobered at once.

"Louise, I beg your pardon. I am a thoughtless fellow, but you shall see I will help the work I have hindered. Now wait; I'll show you a design worth two of that, Teresita. Maltese crosses, indeed! See this fancy, which all the Spanish girls drape their beautiful arms with on great days:" and Jermyn, who had employed his artist's eye to advantage in his foreign wanderings, sketched out on the envelope of a letter a "fancy" that drew forth even that cool, grave, worried Louise's admiration, and over which Thérèse was enthusiastic. And after this, while Thérèse sewed, he sat and watched her, making some quiet remark now and then, which went unproved by Louise. She was a pretty thing to look at, was Teresita; as he would persist in calling her, after Garibaldi's lovely daughter in Mrs. Browning's poem: a pretty thing to look at, with her sweet eyes, her flickering colour, her graceful motions. And that day she was clad quaintly in a curious dress of black serge, with a deep frill of yellowish old lace at the throat, from which arose the stately little head, "sunning over with curls" of a deep chestnut brown. It was a dress for economy, Louise would have told you; yet, for all that, it looked like an artist's fashioning, and gave the otherwise gay brightness of the wearer a nun-like appearance, which was further carried out by the odd chain, or necklace, of dark carved beads which hung down like a rosary.

Mr. Jermyn, scanning her all over, began to think that he disapproved of this chain: it looked dark and heavy.

"Teresita, I cannot think why you wear that chain round your neck so often!"

"She wears it constantly," exclaimed Louise, a little reproachfully. For she did not much like the chain herself.

Thérèse flushed; but answered in quick defiance of them both.

"I wear it because my grandmamma told me to. Poor Aunt Joan wore it till she died, and then grandmamma locked it up; and one day she got it out and put it on my neck, and told me to wear it. And I am sure, William Jermyn, you know all this. Or you ought to know it."

"And how should William Jermyn know it?" put in Louise. "Has he not been always away of late years?—and what has he to do with the Freer part of the family? He belongs to the Van Dests, and is only our third or fourth cousin, child. But it was always a trait of the Van Dests to hold to its least link as if it were the nearest."

"I'm glad of it," exclaimed Teresita, with vigorous vehemence, so that both her auditors looked at her in surprise. But the moment the words escaped her, her face was in a dazzle of smiles and blushes. What was it she was glad of?—that he was only their third or fourth cousin? Louise felt no doubt upon the point; for she believed Thérèse disliked the young man.

But Mr. Jermyn put upon it a different interpretation as he met those dazzling eyes with a glance of triumph: he remembered a little girl who had once sat upon his knee when he was a boy of fifteen, and had lifted just those eyes to his, and in just that ringing voice had exclaimed, in a tone of decision: "I am glad you are not my first cousin, William Jermyn, because grandmamma says that first cousins may not marry: and I mean to marry you when you are a big man, and I am a big girl."

The boy was a big man now and the child had grown into a young woman: quite different from the pretty little elfing who had sat upon his knee. And he had forgotten a good deal about her, and, with the rest, her promise, until the charm of her maturer presence set him searching for every past remembrance. And here was a remembrance worth recalling, and suddenly he sees the child-face and hears the childish speech of ten years gone by, as again the same eyes, with deeper dewiness, the same speech, with sweeter syllables, repeats the same old words. And was he right?—was it that she was glad now for the same reason that she professed to be ten years ago, or was it for the Van Dest tradition of tenacity? Both were possible; how could he determine which was in her mind? When his college career had terminated, he went to study in Germany. And since he had come back, and entered into the profession that he meant to make his own, he had never been quite able to determine what was in Teresita's mind; never been quite able to tell how much was child, how much was woman; how much was play, how much was earnest, through all the variations of her manner. Sometimes she seemed so frank he thought there was nothing left in her for him to discover: at the next meeting, a mocking elf baffled him. And again it was a serious, pensive woman, almost a nun; and anon a simple child. She looked something like the nun now, as she, her work dropped, touched the brown beads with a caressing hand. All in a moment, the thread broke—perhaps it had been worn too long—and the beads fell in her lap.

"There!" she cried. And, pulling at the string, there came out from the folds of her gown a curious appendage. It was a dark oblong object, banded here and there with glistening steel, and it fell on the carpet.

Mr. Jermyn picked it up, and looked at it curiously.

"Take care of that," cried Louise, with a slighting laugh. "Thérèse looks upon it as a charm: it is for that she wears the necklace."

"Why," said the young man, "it is nothing in the world but one of those nuts that Uncle Michael used to bring home from his voyages to India. It is darkened by age and further disguised by this queer steel flummery round about it. Fie, Teresita, it is an Indian fetish you have been wearing all this time!" And the young man laughed provokingly.

Teresita had a vein of superstition running through her nature. She believed in various signs and omens, and held to old family legends with tenacious pleasure, and as she did believe in this amulet, she retorted sharply.

"Mr. Jermyn, you know nothing about it whatever. If my Grandmother Freer, whose sense you can hardly doubt, sir, thought fit to preserve this old relic as a memento of the past, and if she half believed it to be associated, as the tradition runs, with the prosperity of the family, it is scarcely meet for her descendants to cast scorn upon it."

She spoke with great dignity, giving a stately glance both at her sister and her cousin. Louise smiled: she had no superstition whatever; but she was fond of her pretty sister, and liked to humour her. William Jermyn looked at them both, scarcely understanding.

"Teresita, you don't really mean to say that you believe in that little relic of an amulet—that you think it keeps harm from you—or gives any blessing?"

"Never mind what I think, sir. Why did you say it was no better than one of Uncle Michael's nuts?"

"My dear child—I grant you it is not a nut. It is a little amulet, carved the same as the chain. But I think it is rather a clumsy ornament to wear. And you surely do not believe that it has any protecting properties!"

Teresita had sought out some fine twine, dark and strong, and was threading the beads again. She melted at his gentleness, and the fire went out of her eyes.

"I can't say that I really believe anything about it, William Jermyn; but it has a singular charm for me, and I know I had rather lose all the trinkets my Grandmother Freer left me than this. It may be because it looks so mysterious, because nothing positive can be told of it, except that its possession in the family was held to bring good luck. You cannot deny, Louise, that grandmamma believed that."

Louise nodded. The young girl continued.

"And it had a certain poetic interest, from the fact that it was always worn by grandmamma's sister-in-law, the beautiful Aunt Joan, whose picture hangs in the library. You know her history, William. For two or three years before her death she was insane, in a quiet, melancholy, harmless sort of way. She was superstitiously attached to this chain and amulet, never letting them be off her neck: and once, when she accidentally broke the thread, as I have done now, her distress was terrible. Grandmamma used to tell all these things in her fascinating manner until they seemed to be as much a part of my remembrance as hers. She was deeply attached to Aunt Joan; and I think she loved the amulet—or charm, as Aunt Joan called it—for her sake: and I think, too, that she must have become imbued with a little of Aunt Joan's superstition regarding it. Any way, I am

quite sure that when grandmamma at last hung the amulet round my neck and charged me to take care of it, she thought she was giving me a great gift."

"And, therefore, you treasure them," remarked Mr. Jermyn, as he rose to take his leave.

"Yes. Would not you?"

"I would," he answered, laughing: "though I don't go so far as to say that I should wear them always: or look upon the amulet as a charm that would keep me from evil. Fare you well, Teresita. Good afternoon, Louise."

They returned his salutation; Louise with right good will. She had no love for boy and girl folly, as she regarded this wasting of time, and she was anxious to get the work finished.

In the days gone by, there lived in this good old-fashioned mansion—which stood amidst its own land a mile or two removed from the bustling metropolis—one Marcus Freer: a wealthy gentleman and a courtly, quite of the old school. The estate was his, and other property besides. He had a wife and an only child—a daughter. The daughter, indulged and self-willed, married Mr. Van Dest; married him in spite of her father. Mr. Van Dest was of good family, but poor; Miss Freer was, or would be, very rich: some people thought that Mr. Freer might have set the one's poverty against the other's wealth; and, perhaps, had it been anybody but Mr. Van Dest he would have done so. But between the Freers and the Van Dests ran a long-continued feud, originating in a lawsuit; and Mr. Freer hated young Van Dest, and would not give way one iota to his daughter's love. The Van Dests, originally from French Flanders, had settled here a generation or two ago. William Jermyn's mother was a cousin of theirs.

Miss Freer married Mr. Van Dest. Not exactly in defiance—at least, she did not look upon it as such, for she was supplicating ever for her father's consent, and she fully believed that he would run to offer his forgiveness at the very church door, she, his cherished daughter. Not so. Mr. Freer was implacable. And the first thing he did was to make a fresh will and leave his daughter's name out of it. A few years went on, and then Mr. Van Dest, never very strong, died. Mr. Freer relented a little then; and yielding to his wife's earnest persuasion, he received his daughter home again, with her two little children, Louise and Thérèse. Again the years went on, and Mr. Freer himself died. When his will was searched for, the one only to be found was that which he had made disinheriting his daughter. Everything was left to his wife for her life: at her death it all went to a distant relative, one Squire Ford. Old Mrs. Freer was surprised: she knew that her husband had made a later will. But no fresh will could be found, and the other had to be acted upon.

Before Mr. Freer died, a great tribulation had come upon him. His sister Joan, so renowned for her beauty as to be called the

beautiful Miss Freer, and who was many years younger than himself, had fallen into melancholy. This went on to positive insanity. She was never sufficiently insane to be sent from her home; but had to be confined to her own apartments. She had always resided with her brother and his wife, never having married. When her niece (of whom she was very fond) married Mr. Van Dest, it affected her bitterly. She shared in all the family hatred of the Van Dests, and openly said she would rather have seen Louisa die than marry Van Dest. Neither (unlike her brother) did she ever forgive Louisa; and when the latter came back with her two children, Aunt Joan could never persuade herself to be cordial with them. The melancholy set in, and it ended in insanity: but the poor lady was always placid, always gentle. Death became busy with the Freer household. Mrs. Van Dest was the first to go; Mr. Freer next; then Aunt Joan; and finally Mrs. Freer.

Now came in all the terrible distress that such a will entailed. During Mrs. Freer's life time it was not felt; perhaps was hardly thought of by the two young girls, her granddaughters. Louise and Thérèse Van Dest had now to realise the fact that they were penniless. Save for a few odds and ends of personal effects of their grandmother's, and for a small sum of money that she had saved, but she was ever improvident, they had absolutely nothing. All the property, including the grand old house and its furniture, belonged now to Squire Ford and his sons: these distant relatives who had no claim to it, who had not expected it and did not want it, for they had plenty of money of their own. The old Squire, whom they had never seen, lived a hundred miles away. When he found that he had inherited, he wrote to the late Mr. Freer's solicitors and also to the young ladies themselves, intimating that for a twelvemonth at least he should not think of entering into possession of the house, and expected that the young ladies would remain in it for that period of time as their home. But he said not a word about adding to their means, or settling any small income upon them. The more one has, the more one wants.

That twelvemonth had now nearly expired, and Louise and Thérèse were looking out for another home. They had gladly taken advantage of the offer (though many girls would not, under the circumstances), and stayed in the house, discharging all the servants but one, and living in the most simple manner. But to live ever so simply takes money in these expensive days, and very little was left in hand of what Mrs. Freer had been able to bequeath them. It was necessary that they should do something for a living, and they were already looking out privately for situations as governesses. Louise accepted the position without a murmur; Thérèse wept in the solitude of her chamber. They had already passed from the luxury of a costly household to one of strict economy and restraint; now they were to pass to servitude; what the next change would be, neither of them could foresee.

"It is our destiny, I suppose," grumbled Thérèse, when the negotiations for their going out were finally completed. "I wonder, Louise, whether we shall quite die of it?"

"Don't be silly, child," reproved Miss Van Dest.

II.

"And what comes next? The Deluge?"

This question was from Mr. Jermyn. He sat before Louise, pulling angrily and fiercely at his moustache. She had been telling him of their plans—that she and Thérèse were both going out as governesses.

"We have no other resource, William."

"But you are gentlewomen!"

"Reduced," added Louise. "What else is there for reduced gentlewomen to turn to? Would you have us keep a shop?"

"But you are so unfitted for it."

"Excellently well fitted for it, I think," she returned, correcting him. "We have both enjoyed a first-rate education."

"Louise," he said after a pause, the moustache being pulled more fiercely than ever in utter unconsciousness, "would Teresita let me stand between her and this alternative, do you think? You know what my income is."

"William Jermyn!"

"Yes, I love her, Louise; and I want her."

Louise shook her head. "I must speak plainly, William: it would be the sheerest folly to begin on such an income. It is barely enough for yourself, and the end might be worse than the beginning."

"But, Louise, I shall soon be making money, and so adding to it."

"How do you know that? It is what all young barristers think. Recollect the risk."

"Yes, yes, I know, Louise; but it is hard to see you both going away to this servitude."

"Does she love you, Mr. Jermyn?"

A pang struck him at this question, for his instinct had not served him to discover the state of Teresita's heart. He feared she did not. Louise felt sure she did not.

"I fear you have been nourishing a chimera, William, if you have nourished the idea that she cares for you. My impression is that it is just the contrary. She is no better than a wayward child, either; only nineteen a month ago."

"Do you mind my asking her?"

"I have no right to mind it," said Louise: "better for you, perhaps, that you should set the matter at rest. But there must be no question of marriage yet, in any case, you understand. Upon your small income——"

"But if Teresita should consider it large enough?"

"She could not. She is very silly; but she is not silly enough for that. Here she is!"

Teresita came in, singing unconsciously, breaking off her song to drop a saucy curtsy of mock ceremony to Mr. Jermyn. Louise left the room, and Teresita sat down and took up her work. He waited to see if she would speak of the new plan; but she talked of twenty other things in twenty minutes, and never alluded to it. He got out of patience at this.

"Teresita, why don't you tell me you are going out as governess?" he broke out at last.

"Because Louise has already told you," and she laughed at him gaily over her strip of hemming.

"How did you know that?"

"How? I can't tell; I felt it in the atmosphere, I suppose; and you looked so savage, too."

His eyes lighted. "You knew I should feel it deeply, Teresita."

"Yes, I knew it would be a sword thrust into the Van Dest pride."

A streak of colour flashed across his brow. "And you didn't think I might have other thoughts—that I might feel a man's pity for women thus situated?" he exclaimed, impatiently.

She looked up at him quickly. Louise had not returned, and the twilight was falling. The hour, the circumstances, were tempting him to full confession; but over it all rose Louise's words, her warning, and more than all, her embargo, concerning the smallness of his present means. Teresita's eyes had dropped after that one quick glance. There was a waiting hush for a few minutes; in it you could have heard every movement of leaf and bird and insect outside the open window. Something in the girl's expression of face warned him not to speak—told him that his suit would be rejected.

Suddenly she rose from her seat, went to the other end of the room and sat down to the piano. A loud crash of chords broke the silence, which had, perhaps, become slightly embarrassing to her, combined with Jermyn's steadfast looks. She was playing a gay, light, spirited fantasia. Louise, hearing it, came back, bringing a lighted taper. The flame, flaring brilliantly in the spring wind, fell on the player. It showed to Louise a sweet, cold face, unlit by any look of emotion. The face of Jermyn she could not see; it was turned toward the dark, rainy night. Without a word, Louise knew that Jermyn had not spoken, and her heart uttered a thanksgiving.

"And where is it that you think of going?" he asked of Louise, as the fantasia came to an end and Teresita turned round on the music-stool.

"I am going to Holly Hill, to Sir George Meredith's," she answered. "Thérèse is going to the Anthonys. A family ——"

"To the Anthonys! How odd!"

"Why odd?"

He laughed; evidently a forced laugh. "Well, because—because I know them, I suppose."

He was looking in an entirely different direction, but he knew that Teresita's eyes were turned toward him.

"What do you know of them, Mr. Jermyn?" asked Louise. "You must tell me."

"Nothing very terrible, Louise; only that they are not of your kind. I don't think Teresita will like being there."

"But why not?"

"As society goes now, and wealth is the one thing considered, the Anthonys would call themselves gentlepeople, I suppose. But they have never been so yet, and were not reared so. They are purse-proud; and Mrs. and Miss Anthony have not, I should judge, much regard for the feelings of others, especially for a governess. Wilfully unkind, they may not be; but they will lack thought and consideration."

"Well, we must not look for perfection; we work for hire, not for consideration," answered Louise, with grim resolution. And then again in a moment she resumed: "I daresay we were not easy task-mistresses either. I remember I used to give a vast deal of trouble to my governesses."

Teresita sat silent, tranquilly occupied over the strip of hemming she had taken up again at the table. Even her face was passive. But Louise was full of questions.

"Tell me about the Anthonys, Mr. Jermyn. Is it a large family? I only knew there were two young children."

"Yes, there are the two children and two grown-up daughters, though I don't know whether the second calls herself 'out,' and two sons."

"Sons! Are they grown-up?"

"They are the eldest of all. One of them, George, is in the army: Robert is an engineer." As he paused a moment, a red streak again flushed his brow. "Handsome, gentlemanly fellows both of them," he concluded in a firm, decided tone.

Still Teresita sewed tranquilly and silently; but Louise's keen glance swept from one to another, reading each of them, she thought. Jermyn was restless and moody; now standing at the window, looking out on the star-lit evening, now leaving it to pace the room. All his gracious gaiety of manner had forsaken him.

"How soon do you leave?—and go?" he asked.

"The beginning of next month—June," Louise answered, with a sad note in her voice, glancing towards the garden where next month would find her roses all in bloom.

"And the old house? What is to become of it?"

"We know nothing. Only that we shall leave it for ever."

He stamped his foot impatiently. "And it ought to be yours,

every rood of it ! And Eastburn ought to be yours ; and the whole Freer estates ! There never was so unjust a will made since the world began !”

“But it is a very common thing for a father to disinherit a child who marries against his wish,” said Louise calmly.

Jermyn laughed a short bitter laugh. “Common it may be where there is sufficient cause ; but why should your proud Grandfather Freer make so unreasonable an opposition to a Van Dest ?”

A faint smile flickered across Teresita’s lips and died in a sigh. But Louise answered as coolly as ever. Her temperament was so perfectly equable.

“You forget, Mr. Jermyn : it was not a matter of pride. The Van Dests were as good a family as the Freers.”

“I should think so,” ejaculated Jermyn with swift emphasis.

Louise paid no heed to this ; but again there flickered across Teresita’s lips that curious, faint smile.

“As good a family as the Freers,” added Louise. “Though he, my father, had no wealth, you know, to carry out the Freer magnificence to which my mother had been accustomed. But it was not the poverty that influenced my grandfather ; he had no moneyed ambition for his children, for he felt himself—and indeed he was—something of a prince, with the great Freer estates of those days. But there was the old feud, you know, which had been transmitted from father to son, and he hated and distrusted all that branch of the Van Dest family. And directly after my mother’s marriage he made this will, in his anger, disinheriting her. Grandmamma said he did make another will, revoking the first, and the lawyers confirmed it. But you know all this. No other will was found ; it was supposed he repented of it afterwards and destroyed it, retaining only the former one, by which——”

“By which you are wronged !” interposed Jermyn fiercely. He stopped suddenly here in his walk. “Louise, with all this old story haunting your mind so closely, did never a suspicion of foul play suggest itself to you ?”

Miss Van Dest’s quiet face relaxed into a half-amused, a half-derisive smile.

There *had* been suspicions of it, she said, chiefly entertained by good old Rachel, her grandmamma’s maid. Not by anyone else, that she knew of ; such suspicions were too fanciful and absurd for common daylight : in the nineteenth century people did not destroy wills—except in novels.

“I wonder where the lost will was deposited ?” mused Jermyn.

“In this house. Grandmamma said so. Her husband brought it home himself from the lawyers, and locked it up. And there was no one here to play false : only himself, grandmamma, and Aunt Joan—besides the servants.”

“Where were the Fords then ?”

"Where they are now—at their own place in Devonshire. You must remember that nobody, save the lawyer, Mr. Drake, knew that the Fords were as much as mentioned in the will. They did not know it; grandmamma did not."

"You do believe then, Louise, that Mr. Freer destroyed the later will himself?"

"Certainly I do. Grandpapa had a most perverse and unreliable temper."

"And the effect of this perversity falls upon you. And those Ford cousins, with none of the Freer open-handedness and all the Freer cold-bloodedness, profit by it!"

"We want nothing that is not ours—we want nothing of the Fords!" exclaimed Louise.

"But it *is* yours; an equal portion of the Freer property is yours by every law of justice; and if the Fords had been honourable, high-minded people, they would have at once righted the great wrong that has been done you."

"William Jermyn, you are chimerical. The Fords have done as the world generally does—no worse, no better."

Rising as she spoke, Miss Van Dest proceeded to put her sewing away. The young man knew it was his signal—that his evening with them was at an end and he must be going.

"I have been asking your sister whether I could be allowed to stand between you and this degradation of going out to the Anthonys. Can it be, Teresita?"

He stood before her, speaking in a low tone. Louise was over at the work-table by the door, and did not see or hear. Thérèse looked up at him, half startled—but her face regained its impassiveness at once, and she answered coldly and calmly.

"No. Thank you: but—*no*."

"Good night, Teresita."

"Good night, Mr. Jermyn," and into his open palm there came a little light, cold touch, as if a snowflake had fallen at his invitation.

"She does not care for me, she never did," he thought sadly as he went forth into the misty night. "And where she goes my heart will always follow. But I know how it will be; one of those confoundedly good-looking Anthonys will get her. Ah, there's a fate in it—there's a fate in it!"

III.

Teresita had been in her servitude a month. Brief as the time was, it had changed her a good deal. Shy, sensitive, and proud, it was a natural consequence that she should suffer in her present position, for Jermyn had prophesied with true instinct of the treatment she would find in the Anthony family. They were not naturally unkind, but worldly and inconsiderate. Just at first, Mrs. Anthony and her

elder daughters seemed to remember who and what Miss Thérèse Van Dest was, and to accord her consideration: but that did not last a week, and she was allowed to sink into the exact position occupied by former governesses.

As to William Jermyn himself, Teresita had not seen him since she entered upon her new life. Whether he were one of the evening guests, whose tones reached her faintly now and then in her distant room, she did not know, but, if so, he had given her no sign of his presence; and what wonder that she should remember with some bitterness all he had said to her the night before she left her old home. He had seemed then so kind, so sorry; he had held her hand in farewell so warmly, repeating the words over and again: "Remember, remember, Teresita, I shall come to see you very soon." She did remember. With painful pertinacity, too, her mind went back to that other evening when he had appeared so disconcerted at hearing she was going out, to—as he expressed it—a place of service. Well, it was little better. She was at the beck and call of the unruly children: she was put down as an inferior by Miss Belle Anthony. But he never came to see whether it was so or not; he appeared to have forgotten that she existed. Pride was the besetting sin of the Van Dest family: perhaps she and Louise had fatally wounded him by doing what they had done, and he had thrown them up.

A whole month! Four weeks of loneliness amid strangers! It was very hard upon this delicate girl, who had lived so happy a home life. But it was better to be utterly alone in her own room, after her duties were over, than to be summoned, as she had been once or twice, to play for the children down stairs. There, visitors of the family had dropped in, and Teresita had felt painfully that she had no longer any place but that of an alien. She was not introduced to people: nobody seemed to consider her at all.

One evening, at the end of these four weeks, she was sitting in her chamber, thinking of all this, when there came one of the summonses she dreaded. The youngest child, a girl of ten, ran in, loud and common.

"Miss Van, you are to come down and play to us. We want to dance."

Miss Van—it was the way in which the young ones chose to contract her name—knitted her brow and paused.

"Who is there, Julia?"

"Nobody: only ourselves. Belle and Lizzie want to try a new figure with us, and you are to play."

She went down; she might not refuse. It was certainly a relief to find the drawing-room free of guests, and she fervently hoped it would remain so. But while Miss Belle was whirling about to her playing, there came a ring at the door-bell which stayed the whirling feet, and before Teresita could find time to excuse herself and escape, the dreaded visitors were already in the room. But she hoped, by

remaining quiet in the remote alcove where the piano stood, that she should evade notice. She sat on, leaning her head upon her hand : the hum and buzz of conversation reaching her ear. Then she heard the entrance of another guest, and then the voice of Miss Belle.

"Why, Mr. Jermyn, what a stranger you are !"

Teresita started a little : and the next thing she heard was Jermyn's reply.

"Yes, I have been ill. I have scarcely been out of the house, until to-day, for a month."

"And what has been the matter with you ?" asked Mrs. Anthony.

"A sort of low fever, I believe. Nothing dangerous, but the doctor kept me quiet, lest it should go on to danger."

Teresita, looking up from her obscure corner, felt a thrill of thanksgiving and pain at one and the same time. She could see him as she sat ; could see how pale and thin he looked : and only herself knew how her heart beat, how it went out to him.

"Dancing ?—no, thank you, Miss Belle ; not to-night," Teresita next heard him say in answer to the young lady. "To tell you the truth, I was hardly up to coming out to-night, but I wanted to see my cousin. She is with you, I believe ?"

"Your cousin ?"

"My cousin : Miss Thérèse Van Dest."

"But she is not your cousin ?"

"Indeed she is. My name, though perhaps you may not know it, is Van Dest Jermyn. And—why, there she sits !" he broke off. "Teresita !"

Looking up she saw a glowing face and an outstretched hand coming toward her ; and then there was a confused greeting.

The Anthonys were thoroughly surprised ; perhaps not altogether pleased. Mr. Jermyn, a rising man, was one of their most welcome visitors : there appeared to be a sort of presumption in a governess claiming cousinship with him.

"We had not an idea of it," spoke Miss Belle, haughtily.

She turned her attention, as did Mrs. Anthony, to the other guests, more of whom came in, leaving Mr. Jermyn a few moments in the remote alcove.

So, once more William Jermyn found himself alone with Teresita. Looking in her face he saw what she had suffered. It was pale and weary and sad. The blithe youthfulness was already fading swiftly and surely. A pang of fear smote him, for he knew something of the delicacy of her constitution. He knew, too, how sorrow and pining had killed more than one Van Dest. And, thinking of this, he forgot Louise's warning, forgot that "No," of Teresita's, forgot every uncertainty, and, in a few vehement words, whispered out the tale of his passion. For a moment he was sure that she loved him ; for into her face flushed a light and a bloom that transformed it to radiance :

but in the next moment it had gone, and her answer was troubled and discouraging.

"No, no. You must not think of it. It cannot be."

"But why?" he asked.

She did not say why. She only remained cold as a statue in answer to all his impassioned pleading; reiterating again the No—no.

With a heavy heart he turned to leave her: he had seen Mrs. Anthony glance towards them once or twice.

"Is this irrevocable, Teresita?"

"Entirely irrevocable."

"Good-bye, then, Teresita," he said sadly.

She put out her hand, and an expression he could not fathom came into her face. She hesitated a moment, then faltered a little and became a little paler.

"Will you—is it selfish in me to ask you to be my cousin just the same—to come and see me now and then?" she asked. "I have so few friends, you know, Mr. Jermyn."

The tears dimmed his eyes at the pathos of her tone.

"Yes, yes, I will come, Teresita." And with this promise, and a clasp of the hand, he left her.

He was true to his promise. He told Mrs. Anthony that he must, with her permission, be allowed to call occasionally on his cousin, who had no other relative to do so—and he was but a distant one. Mrs. Anthony graciously acceded after a moment's hesitation: and begged his pardon for putting a question.

"May I venture to ask if you are engaged to your cousin, Mr. Jermyn?"

"I am not. So far as I know, I never shall be."

So he called now and then. Thérèse was always pleased to see him, always cordial in a cousinly way; but there it ended. One jealous fear began to torment the young barrister—that she was falling in love with George Anthony, and he with her.

"*That's* what will be the end of it," he thought with anguish.

IV.

"Thérèse, you look just as though you were pining yourself to death!"

The impulsive words broke from Miss Van Dest. This was the first time she had come to see Thérèse, though eight months had elapsed since they quitted their home. The family in which Louise lived (as chaperon and companion, more than as governess, to one young lady) had taken her away with them travelling, and she had but now returned.

"I am very well," said Thérèse.

"But I say you are not well. Are these Anthonys exacting—inconsiderate?"

"Not at all. At least, not more so than other people would be, Louise."

Louise looked at her keenly. "I have heard a rumour, Thérèse—that you are in love."

"In love! Who told you that?"

"William Jermyn. I met him this morning as I came here. He says that one of the young Anthonys—George, I think—is only waiting for you to say 'Yes,' to his suit."

A stream of colour made Thérèse's cheeks crimson; her eyes danced a little as of old. She knew very well by this time what Mr. Jermyn thought about George Anthony; but she had never sought to undeceive him. What could it be to Jermyn?

"Mr. Jermyn is very foolish, Louise; quite mistaken. George Anthony is nothing to me,"

"He wanted you himself, you know, Thérèse."

"Who did?"

"William Jermyn."

"Did he! He is very absurd."

"I know you always disliked him. But what is it that is the matter with you, Thérèse? Your cheeks are pale, your eyes weary. I am sure you are pining."

"Perhaps I am," carelessly answered Thérèse.

Louise, direct, unimaginative, and full of that active desire which such persons have to right things, was now entirely puzzled. Greatly impatient of what seemed to her this useless pining, she began to scold Thérèse heartily, but with no unkind intent. She was in the full tide of a very earnest appeal, when Teresita gave a sudden little terrified cry, which made her break off.

"What *is* the matter, Thérèse?"

"My amulet, my amulet! Just look, Louise!"

Thérèse, listening (or not listening) to her sister's scolding, had been leaning from the open window. Her chain of beads, hanging down, had caught in the hinge of the large blind, and became fixed there. She could neither disengage it nor stir it. Louise, running to see what was the matter, saw her pulling and tugging—but all with tender gentleness—and Louise was quite irate.

"Such child's play, Thérèse! To make a cry over that thing! I'm sure I thought you must have torn your hand!"

"It is my charm, Louise."

"Charm! What charm has it had for you? What good has it ever brought you? Here! take your fingers away, child, while I disengage it."

With no very gentle hand, she gave the blind a wrench. There was a slight crash, and—the amulet was broken.

"Oh, Louise, Louise, what have you done?"

"Yes, I see. I am very sorry: I would not have done it willingly. But don't be a baby, Thérèse! We can get it mended, I daresay."

Louise, really sorry, but ashamed to manifest her sorrow, took refuge in crossness. In this spirit she went back to her chair; while Thérèse, through foolish, blinding tears, was regarding the ruin of her treasure. It was hopelessly crushed, though still retaining its form; but at a touch of her hand it fell apart, and there rattled out—what was it?

Not a shrunk and withered kernel, as they had sometimes opined that the nut contained; not the little dry bones of an inner shell. Did a withered kernel ever take such shape as this? did dry bones ever wear such practical colour and resemblance? Here in her hand lay a tiny key, a quaintly-fashioned key, which this mysterious relic disclosed, the gilding only slightly dimmed by its long seclusion. Folded tightly across the rim was a strip of tarnished paper. Unrolling it, Thérèse glanced at her sister. Miss Van Dest was gazing with open eyes, astonished for once in her life. But she did not quit her seat. Thérèse read:

"This is the key to my Indian *escritoire*, wherein I have buried the great Freer wrongdoing. Justice shall find its own again."

"What can this mean, Louise?" Forgetful now of the destruction of her treasure, Thérèse went over to her sister, holding out the broken amulet, the key, and the scrap of paper. Miss Van Dest turned a little pale as she took them into her own hands. Was a possible solution striking her?

"Whose writing is this, Louise?"

"Aunt Joan's," answered Louise, briefly.

"Yes, I was nearly sure of it—but it is very cramped. What can it all mean? And what does she mean by her Indian *escritoire*?"

Louise waited a moment, thinking; then spoke rather slowly and thoughtfully.

"I believe she must mean that old piece of carved wood which we children used to call her Indian idol. I remember how she used to keep it at the head of her bed, and what store she set by it."

"That old black thing! I used to call it a bogey."

"That old black thing—yes."

"But that could not turn out to be an *escritoire*, Louise. How could it? I daresay this is only one of poor Aunt Joan's delusions."

Louise Van Dest did not reply. She still sat poring over that slip of paper, and turning the little key over and over in her hand. By-and-by she looked up.

"Thérèse, do you think you could get leave to go out with me?"

"What—now?"

"Now. I should like to see the end of this—whether the key has anything to do with that black idol, or not. We will go to the old house together, and ascertain—if Mrs. Anthony will spare you."

Mrs. Anthony, after saying something about the unreasonableness of her governess wanting to absent herself in study hours, and that she supposed it was only to buy a new bonnet, or some nonsense

of that kind, gave an unwilling consent; and the two sisters went forth together.

The old mansion was just as they left it. Its new inheritor had been ill with a long illness, and had not yet come to take possession. The person in charge of it was the same elderly woman who had been the sole attendant on the Miss Van Dests after their fallen fortunes.

She received them with grateful tears: the unexpected sight of them was good for her, she said. They told her what had happened, and went with her in search of the Indian idol.

It was standing where it always had stood—atop of the canopy of poor Aunt Joan's bed. Neither bed nor room had been occupied since Joan left it. The woman stood upon a chair, took down the idol, dusted it, and handed it to the young ladies. It was shaped somewhat like a man's head—which had given rise to the children naming it an Indian idol—and was beautifully carved. Louise handled it attentively.

"Yes—do you see—here is a small keyhole. The thing opens in the middle. Thérèse, we must take a street cab, and carry it to Mr. Drake's."

Thérèse was surprised. "But I should like to open it now."

"I daresay you would! You are just a child and nothing better. This thing must be opened in the presence of people in authority. How do we know what it may contain?"

"Do you know, Louise?"

"No. But I fancy I can guess."

Mr. Drake was the family lawyer. They drove to his office with the Indian idol, and found him at home. He listened to the brief explanation Louise gave him of their presence, and then, with an imperturbable face, took the Indian idol into his hands and examined it.

"I have a fancy that the lost will may be in this," said Louise.

"Will you give me the key, Miss Van Dest?"

The key fitted perfectly in the half-concealed lock, which Mr. Drake found at once. A creak, a snap, and back upon its hinges flew the half of the little dark relic, and revealed a very curious *escritoire*, like a small writing-desk, filled with old papers. Some of them were tied into packets with pink or blue ribbon: they related no doubt to the romance and disappointment which poor Miss Joan had gone through in early life. But these packages Mr. Drake pushed aside, and drew forth a folded paper, fresher looking than the rest—a long, folded paper, and a black-covered book—evidently a diary.

He opened the paper. Then his countenance slightly changed: something like a light came into the cool face. But he read it quite through, and, without speaking a word, proceeded to examine the diary. The light in his face became more perceptible, at last

amounting to a glow, as he turned to the two young ladies and spoke.

"Miss Van Dest, you are right. Here is the latest will your grandfather made, and here is the secret of its hiding, in your Aunt Joan's diary. Madness, like murder, is prone to confessions. Apparently for no reason but to write it down for her own pleasure, she has recorded in her diary the reason for this hiding. She seems to have been vexed that her brother (your grandfather) should have made a will in his daughter's favour after her disobedience: she did not think it right, she says, that Mr. Van Dest's children (yourselves) should inherit the Freer property. Poor thing!"

"But—is the will really right, Mr. Drake? Will it restore to us our own?"

"Entirely."

"People will not doubt the will?"

Mr. Drake smiled. "If anyone were inclined to doubt this will's authenticity, the signature of Jacob Wright—old Jacob, you remember, who was your grandfather's secretary—would prove it to be genuine beyond any question. There was never, I believe, such another chirography as old Jacob's. And now, young ladies, I heartily congratulate you. You can go back to your own house to-morrow."

"There's Mr. Ford?" said Louise.

"Mr. Ford has no more claim on the house or property now than I have," spoke the lawyer. "He will know that. I shall write to him to-day."

But the congratulations and the business talk that followed were heard as in a far-off dream by Thérèse. Poor little Teresita—dear little Teresita—the dark clouds were clearing out of the sky for her at last.

They returned to the home to spend the rest of the day. As Louise observed, there was so much to be thought of and said, connected with this wonderful change. Louise wanted to write a note or two; and Mr. Drake placed his office-boy at their disposal to convey the notes to their destination.

One was to Mrs. Anthony, saying Thérèse could not return to her until the evening, and then it would be for a few days only, while the lady suited herself with another governess. The other was to ask William Jermyn to come down.

"He will advise us about everything, you know, Thérèse," she said. "I must consult with him."

Thérèse answered nothing. Instead of that, she began to hum a careless song.

"I suppose there will be no impediment now to George Anthony's suit, Thérèse," said Mr. Jermyn, after his amazement had subsided, and Miss Van Dest had departed from the room in search of some papers.

"For shame, sir!" Thérèse answered. And to his utter consternation, she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"Teresita! dear Teresita! What have I said? *Don't* you like George Anthony?"

"I hate him. You know I do. He knows it."

What with the words, the tears, and what with a half-reproachful glance from Teresita's eyes, Mr. William Jermyn came to his senses. He folded his arms round her and let her sob out her grief upon his breast.

"But what was the reason that you treated me so coldly, and rejected me, Teresita?"

"Would I hamper you by marrying you upon your little bit of an income? It would have kept you down for life. You once said, yourself, a long while ago—I heard you say it, William—that for a poor briefless barrister to marry early was just ruin."

"What an idiot I was!"

"No, you were not, sir. But things have altered now: and I—I shan't be able to count all my money."

"Your money—there it is! I fear I ought not to aspire to you now."

"Oh, you can take Louise instead if you like."

Louise chanced to come in at the moment, and stood transfixed with amazement. Mr. Jermyn was kissing her sister.

"Well, I'm sure!" she cried. "Thérèse!"

"She is mine now, Louise. Teresita!—my Teresita!"

"And I hope you will never call in question my superstitions again, either of you," cried Teresita, saucily, blushing and smiling, and escaping to a distance. "Aunt Joan's amulet contained a charm, after all. But for that ——"

"But for that I might have missed my Teresita," he interrupted, sadly. "We might have grown old, and never found one another. Teresita! my Teresita!"



TRUE.

MY name is Hunt. Yes, sir; Anthony Hunt. I am a settler and drover on this Western prairie. Wilds? Yes, sir, it's little else than wilds now, but you should have seen it when I and my wife first moved up here. There was not a house within sight for miles. Even now we have not many neighbours: but those we have are downright good ones. To appreciate your neighbours as you ought, sir, you must just live in these lonely places, so far removed from the haunts of man.

What I am about to tell of happened ten years ago. I was going to the distant town, or settlement, to sell some fifty head of cattle—fine creatures, sir, as ever you saw. The journey was a more rare event with me then than it is now; and my wife had always plenty of commissions to charge me with in the shape of dry goods and groceries, and such-like things.

Our youngest child was a sweet little gentle thing, who had been named after her aunt, Dorothy. We called the child Dolly. This time my commissions included one for her—a doll. She had never had a real doll; that is, a bought doll; only the rag bundles her mother made for her. For some days before my departure the child could talk of nothing else—or we, either, for the matter of that—for she was a great pet, the darling of us all. It was to be a big, big doll, with golden hair and blue eyes. I shall never forget the child's words the morning I was starting, as she ran after me to the gate, or the pretty picture she made. There are some children sweeter and prettier than others, sir, as you can't but have noticed, and Dolly was one.

"A very great big doll, please, daddy," she called out after me. "And please bring it very soon."

I turned to nod a Yes to her, as she stood in her clean whitey-brown pinafore against the gate, her nut-brown hair falling in curls about her neck, and the light breeze stirring them.

"A brave doll," I answered, "for my little one. Almost as big as Dolly."

Nobody would believe, I daresay, how full my thoughts were of that promised doll, as I rode along, or what a nice one I meant to buy. It was not often I spent money in what my good thrifty wife would have called waste: but Dolly was Dolly, and I meant to do it now.

The cattle sold, I went about my purchases, and soon had no end of parcels to be packed in the saddle-bags. Tea, sugar, rice, candles—but I need not weary you, sir, with telling of them, together with the calico for shirts and nightgowns, and the delaine for the

children's new frocks. Last of all, I went about the doll—and found a beauty. It was not as big as Dolly, or half as big; but it had flaxen curls and sky-blue eyes; and by dint of pulling a wire you could open or shut the eyes at will.

"Do it up carefully," I said to the storekeeper. "My little daughter would cry sadly if any harm came to it."

The day was pretty well ended before all my work was done; and just for a moment or two I hesitated whether I should not stay in the town and start for home in the morning. It would have been the more prudent course. But I thought of poor Dolly's anxiety to get her treasure, and of my own happiness in watching the rapture in her delighted eyes. So with my parcels packed in the best way they could be, I mounted my horse and started.

It was as good and steady a horse as you ever rode, sir; but night began to set in before I was well a mile away from the town; it seemed as if it were going to be an ugly night, too. Again the thought struck me—should I turn back and wait till morning? I had the price of the cattle, you see, sir, in my breast pocket; and robberies, aye, and murders also, were not quite unknown things on the prairie. But I had my brace of sure pistols with me, and decided to press onwards.

The night came on as dark as pitch, and part of the way my road would be pitch dark besides. But on that score I had no fear: I knew the road well, every inch of it: though I could not ride so fast as I should have done in the light. I was about six miles from home, I suppose, and I knew the time must be close upon midnight, when the storm which had been brewing broke. The thunder roared, the rain fell in torrents: the best I could do was to press onwards in it.

All at once, as I rode on, a cry startled me: a faint, wailing sound, like the cry of a child. Reining up, I sat still and listened. Had I been mistaken? No, there it was again. But in what direction I could not tell. I couldn't see a thing; it was, as I have said, as dark as pitch. Getting off my horse, I felt about, but could find nothing. And while I was seeking, the cry came again: the faint moan of a child in pain. Then I began to wonder. I am not superstitious: but I asked myself how it was possible that a child could be out on the prairie at such an hour and in such a night. No: a real child it could not be.

Upon that, came another thought—one less welcome: was it a trap to hinder me on my way and ensnare me? There might be midnight robbers who would easily hear of my almost certain ride home that night and of the money I should have about me.

I don't think, sir, I am more timid than other people; not as much so, perhaps, as some: but I confess the idea made me uneasy. My best plan was to ride on as fast as I could, and get out of the mystery into safe quarters. Just here was about the darkest bit of road in all the route. Mounting my horse, I was about to urge him on, when

the cry came again. It *did* sound like a child's; the plaintive wail of a child nearly exhausted.

"God guide me!" I said, undecided what to do. And as I sat another moment listening, I once more heard the cry, fainter and more faint. I threw myself off my horse, with an exclamation.

"Be it ghost, or be it robber, Anthony Hunt is not one to abandon a child to die without trying to save it."

But how was I to save it?—how find it? The more I searched about, the less could my hands light on anything, save the sloppy earth. The voice had quite ceased now, so I had no guide from that. While I stood trying to peer into the darkness, all my ears alert, a flood of sheet lightning suddenly illumined the plain. At a little distance, just beyond a kind of ridge or gentle hill, I caught a glimpse of something white. It was dark again in a moment, but I made my way with unerring instinct. Sure enough, there lay a poor little child. Whether boy or girl I could not tell. It seemed to be three parts insensible now, as I took it up, dripping with wet, from the sloppy earth.

"My poor little thing!" I said, as I hushed it to me. "We'll go and find mammy. You are all safe now."

And in answer, the child just put out its feeble hand, moaned once, and nestled close to me.

With the child hushed to my breast, I rode on. Its perfect silence soon showed me that it slept. And, sir, I thanked God that He had let me save it, and I thought how grateful some poor mother would be! But I was full of wonder, for all that, wondering what extraordinary fate had taken any young child to that solitary spot.

Getting in sight of home, I saw all the windows alight. Deborah had done it for me, I thought—to guide me home in safety through the darkness. But presently I knew that something must be the matter, for the very few neighbours we had were collected there. My heart stood still with fear. I thought of some calamity to one or other of the children. I had saved a like one from perishing; but what might not have happened to my own?

Hardly daring to lift the latch, while my poor tired horse stood still and mute outside, I went slowly in, the child in my arms covered over with the flap of my long coat. My wife was weeping bitterly.

"What's amiss?" I asked in a faint voice. And it seemed that a whole chorus of voices answered me.

"Dolly's lost."

Dolly lost! Just for a moment my heart turned sick. Then some instinct, like a ray of light and hope, seized upon me. Pulling the coat off the face of the child I held, I lifted the little sleeping thing to the light, and saw Dolly!

Yes, sir. The child I had saved was no other than my own—my little Dolly. And I knew that God's good angels had guided me to save her, and that the first flash of the summer lightning had shone

just at the right moment to show me where she lay. It was her white sun bonnet that had caught my eye. My darling it was, and no other, that I had picked up on the drenched road.

Dolly, anxious for her doll, had wandered out unseen to meet me in the afternoon. For some hours she was not missed. It chanced that my two elder girls had gone over to our nearest neighbour's, and my wife, missing the child just afterwards, took it for granted she was with them. The little one had come on and on, until night and the storm overtook her, when she fell down frightened and utterly exhausted. I thanked Heaven aloud before them all, sir; as I said that none but God and His holy angels had guided me to her. It's not much of a story to listen to, sir; I am aware of that. But I often think of it in the long nights, lying awake: and I ask myself how I could bear to live on now, had I run away from the poor little cry in the road, hardly louder than a squirrel's chirp, and left my child to die.

Yes, sir, you are right; that's Dolly out yonder with her mother, picking fruit: the little trim light figure in pink—with just the same sort of white sun bonnet on her head that she wore that night ten years ago. She is a girl that was worth saving, sir, though I say it: and God knows that as long as my life lasts I shall be thankful that I came on home that night, instead of staying in the town.



"LET NO FLOWER OF THE SPRING PASS BY US."

So the "ungodly" saith, for "life is short,"

And fleeth as a cloud doth flee away.

Fool! heedst thou not that e'en the cloud is fraught

With treasure that shall never meet decay?

It melts beneath the sun but to obey

That law of blessing by which all is wrought

Of good and gracious. You will suffer naught

Of joy to pass unplucked while it is May?

Well, "crown [*yourself*] with rose-buds;" only know

They shall corrupt to poison round your head:

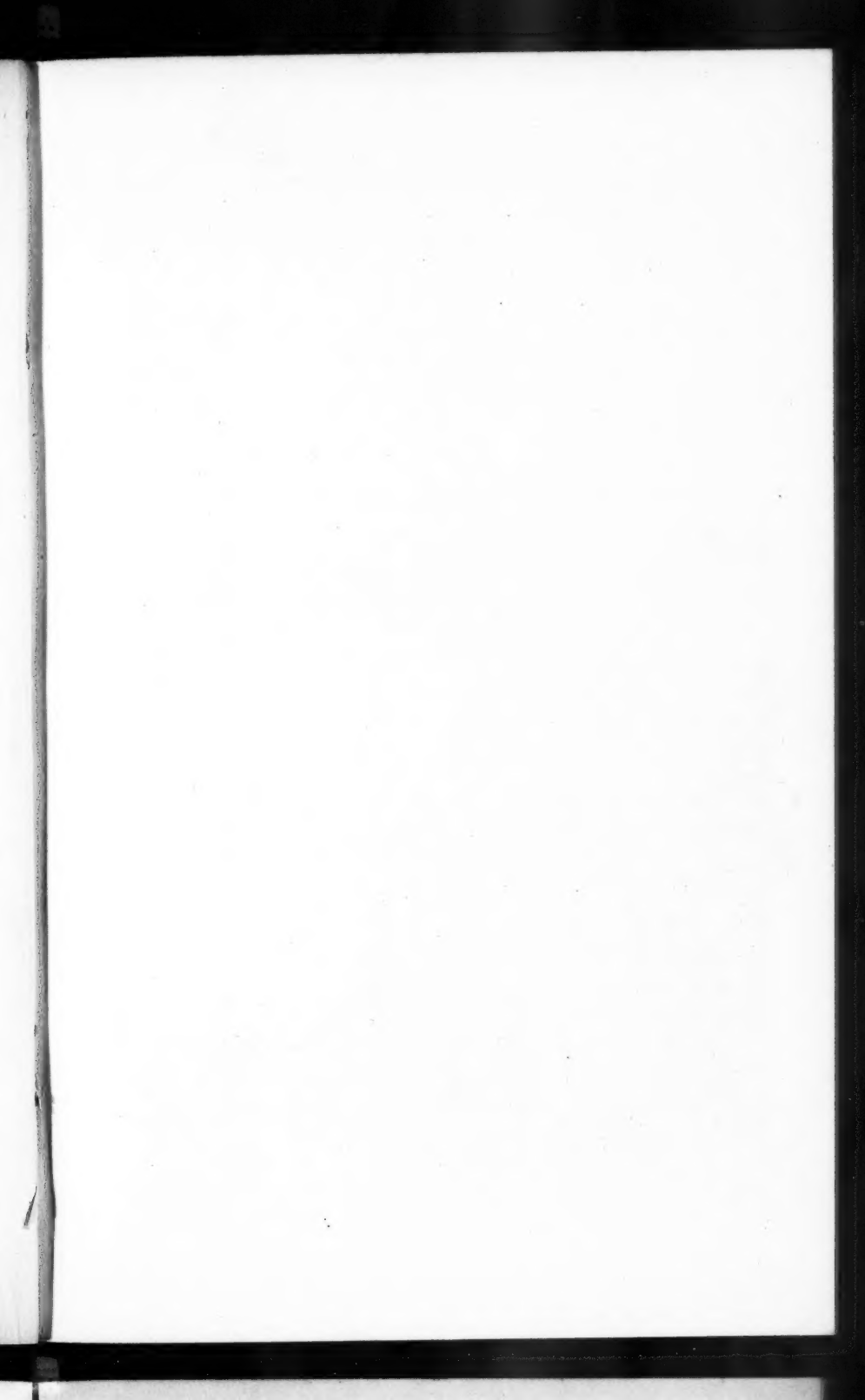
The man who lives but to himself alone

Is little better than the man laid dead:

Who lights all Heav'n with glory from His Throne

Wore grief's sharp wreath of thorns on earth below.

EMMA RHODES.





XL ELLEN EDWARDS.

MRS. CARROLL'S COMMUNICATION

J. SWAIN.